



RELATE

**ADULT CONNECT
CLASS CURRICULUM**

**DONALD J. WILLS
SENIOR PASTOR**



**FEBRUARY
2020**

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

Our theme for 2020 is RELATE. Have you ever engaged in a conversation with a friend or co-worker and can completely “relate” to the situation they are describing to you? By definition, this word means to make or show a connection between. Now, interface this with your walk with Lord. There should be a direct correlation between our everyday life through our actions and communications with others that indicates or displays that Christ guides our life as a central focus. We RELATE biblical truth to life and model it for all to see.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

Let me challenge you for the month of February, as it is known as the “love month,” to show Christ’s love in a practical way. See how you can RELATE what you hear through the Bible study and make that connection into your everyday routines.

-Blessings
Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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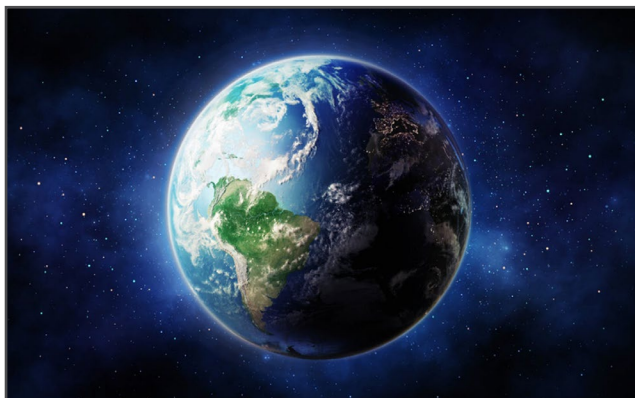


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February 2, 2020



Relate in Our Witness

1 John 1:1-10

Focal Verse:

“The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.”

1 John 1:2

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Introduce

In a courtroom which adjudicated cases concerning civil traffic violations for the city, a distinguished judge had already taken his place on the bench in his customary black robe along with a gavel which he had placed prominently on the desk in front of him. The twelve-member jury sat quietly and ready, even if somewhat unenthusiastic, to hear the evidence presented in the case so they could make an informed decision about the guilt



or innocence of the defendant. Peering at the witness stand, a prominent lawyer stood before the court poised to ask the first of a series of questions to the witness who had just taken her place after receiving the oath.

The lawyer inquired of the witness where she was when the accident occurred. In response, she described eating at a restaurant directly across the street from the intersection. So, the lawyer asked her to relate what she had *seen* at the time the accident happened. She began to relate what she had heard others say who had witnessed the accident. She said, "As people entered the restaurant, they were talking about this horrific accident. They *said* a blue compact car ran the stop sign and hit a red pickup truck, causing it to lose control and spin around. The impact pushed it into the parking meters where copious amounts of coins were hurled into the air as the truck careened onto the sidewalk, sending pedestrians scattering." After patiently listening, the lawyer once again posited, "What did *you* witness? Didn't you *see* any of this for yourself?" To which she answered, "No, sir, I sat at a table on the interior of the restaurant." Before taking his seat, the lawyer looked at the judge and declared, "No more questions, your Honor."

A second witness took the stand and the lawyer's questioning began just as it had with the last one. The witness described how he was walking on the sidewalk in full view of the intersection. He then related the events very dramatically and descriptively because he had experienced the accident more closely than he had ever wanted. In recounting the event, he said, "I *saw* this midnight blue Honda Accord approaching

Introduce

the intersection at a high rate of speed. When the driver realized there was a stop sign, she began applying the brake, but it was too late to stop, so she plowed into the bumper of the red Ford F-150 which sent it into a tailspin. *Seeing* the truck headed for the curb, I dove out of the way, but the bumper slightly grazed me as quarters from the parking meters began to rain down on my head. If that weren't enough, I *observed* the truck hit a fire hydrant, causing a plume of water to spray in the air." The lawyer then thanked him for his testimony as he stepped down from the stand. After hearing both of these testimonies, which of the two accounts would the judge accept as admissible testimony in court?

In court, the first account in which the woman only heard about the accident would be dismissed as hearsay. She hadn't experienced it herself. The second account, however, would be considered valid testimony because the man had seen the accident with his own eyes, heard it with his own ears, and felt the impact of the bumper against his own torso. As followers of Christ, God hasn't asked us to testify or speak about something we haven't experienced ourselves! Quite oppositely, He calls us, just as He did John, to testify about the things which we have seen, heard, and handled with our own hands as found in the Word. If we have a relationship with Christ, then we have a testimony which we must and should relate to the rest of the world. We are called to be His witnesses, so let us as His people relate what God has done for us through Jesus Christ, particularly the salvation He has graciously provided.

Key
Question

What is your testimony concerning the Lord?

1 John 1:1-4

A WITNESS THAT REVEALS LIFE:

Similar to the opening of his Gospel, John begins by describing the pre-existent, eternal, and divine **Word of life** who is Jesus Christ (v. 1). In fact, he very succinctly summarizes the entire introduction to the Gospel by first emphasizing Jesus' eternity by identifying Him as **that which was from the beginning**. Jesus, as God, has always existed; through Him, the entire universe came into existence from nothing ([John 1:3-4](#); [Col 1:16-17](#)). As sovereign Creator, Christ didn't set things in motion and then separate Himself from the world, but He has always remained intimately involved because of His great love.

Even when man destroyed the world through his sinful disobedience, the Lord had a plan from **the beginning** to restore it and bring **eternal life** ([Eph 1:4](#)). As God, therefore, Jesus made Himself visible to all mankind by putting on flesh and coming in human likeness. John, the other apostles, and other first-century eyewitnesses can testify they **have heard** Him, **seen** Him **with their eyes**, **looked upon** Him, and their **hands have handled** Him.

They have first-hand, credible testimony that this is truth! They



have experienced it for themselves—not only through His physical presence, but also through a personal relationship with the **Word of life**.

John takes great care to establish that the validity of their personal testimony comes from first-hand knowledge because some at that time wrongly taught that Jesus did not come in the flesh—that is in physical, human form ([1 John 4:2-3](#)). According to this errant teaching, Jesus was born as an ordinary man. Since flesh is inherently evil in this view, these errant teachers surmised that Jesus took on the persona of God at His baptism when God endowed Him with His Spirit, but God removed His Spirit just before His death, so Jesus died as an ordinary man. The Bible does not teach

Instruct

this philosophy or theology in any way and John vehemently denies it here in 1 John as well. Jesus existed as both fully God and fully man at the same time. We cannot separate His divinity from His humanity! Jesus has existed as God **from the beginning** even before His physical birth by a virgin. Never at any point in His life, ministry, and death did Jesus cease to exist as God. He is God in the flesh—Immanuel, God with us!

Although we haven't physically seen Christ, to what evidence can we point that would indicate His presence?

Question
1

Not only did Jesus create physical life, but when He came He brought spiritual restoration and **life** (v. 2). In this context, **the Word of life** explicitly refers to the incarnation or physical presence of Christ in the world, but it also refers to the message or gospel which tells us how we can have **life**. We cannot separate the Messenger (Christ) from the message (gospel). Christ literally brought the message of God's salvation to **life**; He came solely so that we might know how to have **life** through Him! Therefore, John emphasizes that this **life was manifested** or revealed in Christ that we might have a relationship with **the Father**. For this reason, John underscores their role as witnesses to **the life** Jesus brings because they **bear witness** and **declare** to all what they **have seen** or experienced.

In verses 3-4, John cites the purpose of his letter as declaring how **to have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ** which leads to **eternal life**. Again, John



reiterates that they know this from personal experience because they **have seen and heard** this message directly from Jesus Himself. Thus, they can boldly **declare** this message to others because they themselves have a personal relationship based upon repentance and surrender to Christ. To **have fellowship**, which John will explain in [verses](#)

[5-10](#), means that we have a relationship to the incarnate **Word** through His blood

which cleanses us from sin when we confess and ask for forgiveness. When we **have fellowship with the Father and Son**, He then transforms us to **have fellowship** one with another because now we share a common heritage.

Before finding **eternal life** in **the Word**, we live in selfishness even though at times it may not be overtly obvious in our actions. When we **have fellowship with** Christ, however, we become unified with one goal in which we partner together to honor and glorify Him. For this reason, we collectively as believers find **joy** in worshiping, serving, and proclaiming the name of Christ. Hence, John concludes this section by commenting they have written **these things** so **that** our **joy may be full**. In [John 15:9-17](#), Jesus teaches that we find **joy** in obeying Him, loving Him, and loving others. He even reveals, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). This isn't a self-centered **joy** in which we compete for attention or affection, but one which comes from our genuine worship and service because we adore our Savior.

How does having a relationship with Jesus transform our relationships to other people?

Question
2

Like John and the other first-century eyewitnesses, God has called us to take the witness stand to **declare** what He has done for us and how He has transformed us through His Son. Technically, Jesus came as the first "witness" to reveal how we attain **life** and show us that the way goes through Him (see [John 5:31-40](#)). In John 14:6, Jesus announces, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Thus, Jesus reveals **life** to us in a tangible way. We, as His witnesses, simply point others to that **life** found solely in Him! Therefore, we share with them what we have experienced ourselves based upon Scripture; we don't give secondhand information!

Difficulty can abound when we attempt to describe something to a person that he has yet to experience for himself. We have all probably tried to describe what a certain food or dish tastes like to someone who hasn't eaten it. If we've not eaten ourselves, we certainly cannot describe it accurately; if we have, we try to the best of our ability to relate what it tastes like. By default, many will describe the taste as similar to "chicken," but each food still has a distinctive taste and texture! Therefore, we should invite them to try it and experience it for themselves. Only when they try it for themselves can they fully understand. God has done this with us through Christ. In Psalm 34:8, the



psalmist has invited us to “taste and see the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” As His witnesses, we too should invite others to experience the Lord and trust in Him for **eternal life**, for only through Him can we obtain it. We can explain it through Scripture, but they can only fully understand when they have experienced the Lord and His salvation for themselves.

How often do you witness or testify about the salvation you have in Christ Jesus?

Question
3

1 John 1:5-7

A WITNESS THAT REFLECTS THE LIGHT:

John continues to reveal the exact **message which** they **have heard from** Jesus (v. 5). When **we have fellowship with Him**, we ought to reflect **light**—that is we reflect His holy character according to the new **life** we now live in Him (v. 6). Therefore, we can know what is true and right because **God is light and in Him is no darkness at all**. Metaphorically, **light** has four primary purposes which we can glean from Scripture and see applied here in 1 John. First, **light illuminates**; it shows us the path or direction that we ought to go, so that we can know with certainty how to have **eternal life**. In John 12:35, Jesus teaches, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going” (see also [John 11:10](#)). In this way, Jesus came into the world to show mankind how to have **life** through Him; as [1 John 1:2](#) expresses it, Jesus **manifested** or revealed **life**. Without Christ, men futilely try to find **life** on their own!

Living in Kentucky for many years, I had the opportunity to visit Mammoth Cave on a few occasions. Buried deep in the eroded limestone of southcentral Kentucky, the cave stretched miles and its narrow, winding passageways could often confuse a seasoned guide. These passages, however, often gave way to enormous rooms illuminated by

artificial **light**. At one point on the Historical Tour, the guide asks everyone to stand still and switches off the lights. Standing in utter **darkness**, you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. The only way to exit the cave at that point would be to find someone who has a flashlight (or cell phone) and follow him. If one tried to proceed to leave in this **darkness**, it could have become a disaster. It would have been very easy to become disoriented and get lost further; it would have been easy to stumble or fall down a shaft. Without any



light, there would have been no hope to return to the surface from the middle of the vast cavern. Fortunately, in life, we have a Guide who is **light** and we can follow Him because He has shown us the way to **life**!

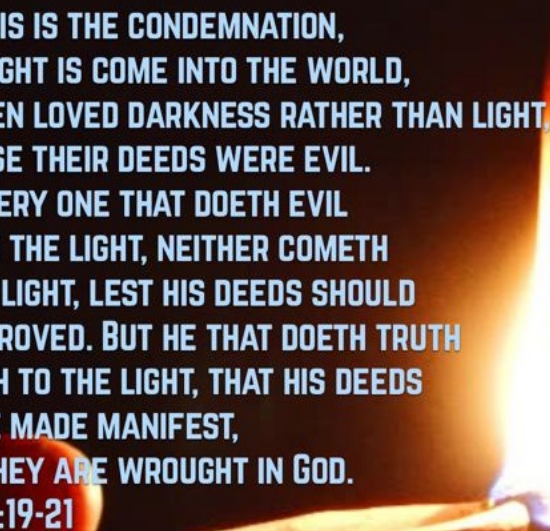
Second, **light instructs**; it gives us the boundaries by which we should live, so that we can stay on the right path. Thus, we can see how **light** enlightens us to the truth; it doesn't tell us what we want to hear, but it reveals the way things really are! We find that instruction in the written Word of the Lord; hence, Psalm 119:105 declares, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." God's Word tells us exactly how to have **life** and outlines the principles by which we should live in our new, transformed **life** in Christ. We shouldn't view biblical instruction simply as a list of dos and don'ts, but as who we ought to be—who our character ought to reflect! Yet, many people never grasp this instruction because they have already stubbornly set their minds against it. In John 1:5, John explains that "the light shines in the darkness, but the darkness did not comprehend it." In this way, these people are headed to death and destruction apart from Christ.

Why is it important to know and understand the instruction God gives? How does Scripture teach us who we ought to be?

Question
4

Third, **light imitates**; in verse 6, John points out that **if we say we have fellowship** or life with **Christ** and **walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth**. In other words, when we have a relationship with Christ, we ought to imitate Him! We

ought to exercise integrity, practice holiness, and live righteously just as He did as an example for us. In John 3:20, Jesus tells Nicodemus, “For everyone practicing evil



AND THIS IS THE CONDEMNATION,
THAT LIGHT IS COME INTO THE WORLD,
AND MEN LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT,
BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL.
FOR EVERY ONE THAT DOETH EVIL
HATETH THE LIGHT, NEITHER COMETH
TO THE LIGHT, LEST HIS DEEDS SHOULD
BE REPROVED. BUT HE THAT DOETH TRUTH
COMETH TO THE LIGHT, THAT HIS DEEDS
MAY BE MADE MANIFEST,
THAT THEY ARE WROUGHT IN GOD.
JOHN 3:19-21

hates the light and does not come to light, lest his deeds should be exposed.” Accordingly, **darkness** means to live in sin and disobedience whereas **light** means to live in obedience to God’s holy commands. Those who live in **darkness** are headed for destruction and death; they have no **life** which only comes through Christ. Therefore, they try

to conceal their deeds, so that they may look better in the eyes of the world and feel justified in their sin; however, in the end, they will not escape judgment, but will be sentenced to death and separation from the Lord and His people. Let us who follow Christ, therefore, not practice such evil deeds, but let us imitate Him and His holiness to bring honor and glory to His name.

Based upon other Scriptures, in what ways has Jesus called us to be light and imitate Him?

Question
5

Finally, **light instills life**. Just as the sun brings life to the world through its warm rays, **the Son** of God brings life to the world through His once-and-for-all sacrifice. In verse 7, John explicitly tells us how we can have life (i.e. **fellowship**). Walking **in light as He is in the light** is the result of our salvation; it is not the means. In other words, we are not saved by doing good deeds and trying to live a good life. We are saved by **the blood of Jesus Christ** which **cleanses us from all sin!** Because we have **fellowship** and salvation through Christ, then we want to imitate Him and live **in the light as He is in the light**. Good works, therefore, are the product of our salvation which Christ finished on the cross when He shed His **blood** in our place, so that we would not have to pay the penalty for our sins if we would only accept this gift of grace. For this reason, Jesus reveals, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12).

In the absolute **darkness** of Mammoth Cave, very few living organisms can be found. Bats, and perhaps some other animals who have adjusted to the dark, use the caverns for their dwellings. However, to have and sustain **life**, they need to leave the cave to find most sources of food since no plant **life** and very little animal **life** exists there. Whether nocturnal or adjusted to the **darkness** of the cave, the animals still depend upon the **light** of the sun for nourishment and sustenance. We also need the **light** of the Son for **life**; apart from Him there is no **life** at all! People may think they have **life**, but the **darkness** has blinded them! In order to live, we need the Son—just as all physical **life** depends upon the sun here on earth.

How has this world blinded people to reality?

Question
6

1 John 1:8-10

A WITNESS THAT REFUSES TO LIE:

Without **light**, we can't see the way things really are and we can't accurately evaluate our current state. Just try picking out an outfit and dressing in the dark to see the effect that **darkness** can have! In the same way, **light** reveals sin and imperfection in our lives. Hence, John points out that **if we say we have no sin**, then **we deceive ourselves** and do **not** know **the truth** (v. 8). To reinforce his point, John argues that **if we say we have not sinned**, then **we make God a liar** because **His Word is not in us** (v. 10). In other words,



God has plainly revealed in Scripture and through Jesus that we all **have sinned**; no one is perfect and morally good. When we compare ourselves with the living Word, we will see how far short we fall from His standard. We shouldn't lie and see ourselves better than we really are; we must recognize that we all sin and we all need forgiveness through the Savior.

Even after we have a relationship with Christ, we need to evaluate ourselves continually through His eyes because we still have the propensity to sin. Therefore, we must correct the problems in our lives which Christ reveals to us as He convicts us. When He

reveals sin in our lives, we need to **confess** it and seek forgiveness (v. 9). Furthermore, we need to **confess** as specifically as possible, so we can identify the areas on which we need to work and to which we need to turn to the Lord to overcome temptation. Probably, many of us get into the habit when we pray of making general statements about forgiveness: "Father, forgive me where I have failed You" or "forgive me of my sins." Although there is nothing inherently wrong with such statements, we should **confess** specific instances when the Lord brings them to mind. Don't we make specific requests and intercessions to the Lord for our daily needs as they arise? In the same way, we should also pray as specifically when we **confess our sins!**

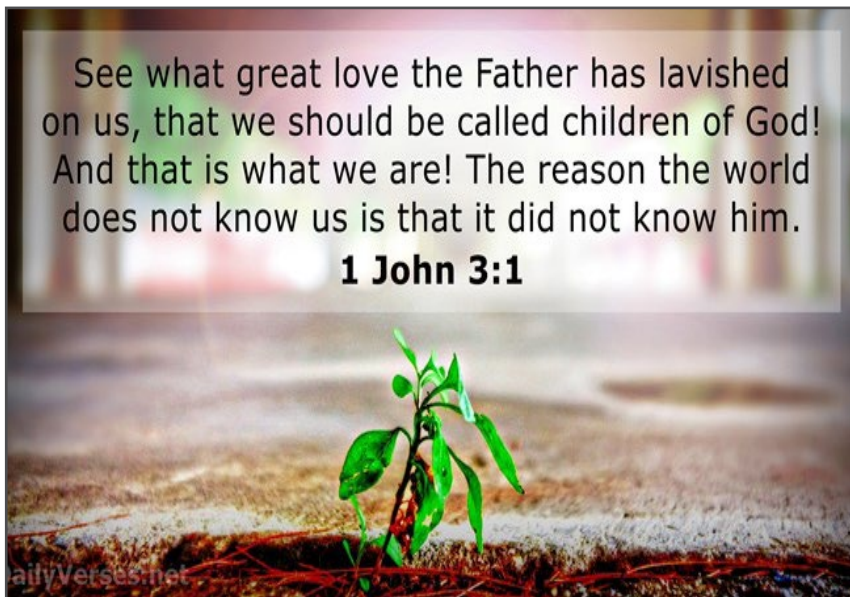
Why is it important to confess our sins specifically when we can rather than making general, sweeping statements?

Question
7

Moreover, we need to **confess our sins**, so that we might return to right standing and fellowship with the Lord. When we **confess** and repent, **He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins** and to reconcile us into right standing with Him by cleansing **us from all unrighteousness**. Even as believers, sin separates us from the Lord and strains our fellowship with Him ([Isa 59:1-2](#)). In order for us to be reconciled and in right fellowship with Him we must **confess our sins** and repent. Because He loves us, He seeks to restore us into a relationship with Him; all we must do is admit we have sinned and we're truly sorry for what we've done through which we show remorse by repenting and not participating in that habitual sin any longer.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

1 John 3:1



We must understand that John is *not* saying that we can lose our salvation and need to be saved again each time we sin! On the contrary, nothing can cause us to lose our salvation once the Lord has adopted us into His family. We have become His children forever and nothing can ever separate us from His love ([John 1:12](#); [Rom 8:38-39](#)). At the same time, however, sin can

hinder our fellowship with Him. Although we shouldn't attribute mere human emotions and situations to the Lord, they sometimes can better help us grasp His position in a way we can understand more clearly. If we wrong a relative in life, for example, it will likely cause us to break fellowship with him or her for a period of time; we won't stop being related to them, but it still hinders our ability to interact with them until we reach out and say we're sorry and show that we have truly repented of the deed we have done.

As a believer, how does sin hinder our fellowship with the Lord?

Question
8

We can know that we have a relationship with the Lord when He convicts and corrects us because He chastens those whom He loves ([Heb 12:5](#)). If we have no conviction over sin and God doesn't correct us, then we must evaluate if we truly are His child because Scripture tells us that those who don't are orphans or "illegitimate children" ([Heb 12:8](#)). On the other hand, God doesn't act like a petty human being who is vengeful, but He offers love and forgiveness to all freely. Fortunately, God didn't sit around, waiting for us to swallow our pride and seek Him, but He proactively came to us. He didn't come to condemn us and say, "I told you so" ([John 3:17-18](#)). On the contrary, He came to redeem and reconcile us; He came to provide a way that we could have life and enjoy the benefits of a relationship with Him ([Luke 19:10](#))! Because God has bestowed such a great love upon us by calling us His children and providing a way that we can have salvation, let us relate to others through our witness of what He has done for us and how He has transformed us!

If we have a relationship with Jesus Christ, then we have a testimony which we can relate to others. This testimony is not second-hand knowledge, but our personal story of how Christ has saved us and transformed us. As followers of Christ, each one of us can point to specific areas in our lives in which we have seen and can see Christ at work. If we can't, then we need to determine if we're His child or if we have simply deceived ourselves into thinking we're a good person. Like John, we need to share daily the things which we have heard and seen confirmed through Scripture that can only point to the loving work of the Father in our lives! We cannot afford to remain silent, but we must passionately declare these things like Peter and John who stood before the Sanhedrin Court and exclaimed: "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

As we go through this year, let us think of practical ways in which we can relate the good news of the gospel to others. Let us be proactive in sharing our faith just as Jesus Himself came to "seek and save that which was lost" ([Luke 19:10](#)). We cannot recoil in fear of political correctness or bow to the multi-faceted beliefs of our modern world, but we need to tell others what we can confidently know from Scripture because we have experienced that life-changing grace for ourselves. If you were called to testify in a court today about the validity of the gospel, what would you say; to what evidence in your life would you point with which others could not dispute because it could only be something that Christ could have done?

Incorporate

How do you relate to others about how Christ has changed your life? To what specific examples can you point of that change?

How do you reflect the light of Christ in your life? In what areas do you need to do better? How do you point others to the true light found only in Christ?

Spend time in prayer this week and ask God to reveal any areas in which you have sinned or not fully surrendered to Him. Write them here as a confession and a reminder of God's grace and forgiveness.

February 9, 2020



Relate in Our Walk

1 John 2:1-7

Focal Verse:

“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.”

1 John 2:6

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Introduce

With Valentine's Day quickly approaching at the end of next week, we are reminded of how God can take two distinctly different people with widely divergent personalities and idiosyncrasies and join them together as one body that functions in love. As a life-long journey, marriage functions as a process in which a couple grows together daily as they seek to know one another more intimately. Over time through shared experiences, they begin to learn what elicits certain reactions, what the other expects, how the other responds, what the other thinks, and they may even pick up some of the same habits and routines. This doesn't occur overnight, but it requires a lifetime commitment and intentional daily



effort to know someone intimately. Such a bond could never form with someone as a mere acquaintance with whom we have limited interaction or only know casually. After fifty years of marriage, Robert and Beth continued to grow closer each day as their love strengthened for one another. Although they had their share of discussions and disagreements along with the challenges and heartaches of life, their faithfulness never waned and they always sought the Lord in their decisions together. As they journeyed through life together, they began to walk like each other! When people saw them, it almost appeared as if they were twins—not in outward appearance, but in how they patterned their lives. Riding in a car with them after church, one wouldn't hear the normal banter between a husband and wife about selecting a restaurant. Neither asked, "Where do you want to eat?" With the other responding, "I don't care. What do you feel like?" They had a consistent routine, yet with unbelievable variety as if the car could almost drive itself to the restaurant they had chosen.

Either one of them could almost always finish the other's sentence, not in an annoying way that interrupted the other, but just from knowing what the other expected. This allowed them to avoid many arguments because they knew how to express themselves in a diplomatic way that didn't irritate the other. They always spoke in love with gentleness and kindness, knowing that they each had the other's best interest at heart.

Introduce

After these many years, they had begun to imitate one another's mannerisms, way of speaking, and quirky expressions. Despite their best efforts, some of the other's habits had rubbed off! They never deviated from their routine, much to the chagrin of their children at times, but they lived consistently and walked faithfully beside each other at all times.

Our relationship with Christ functions in a way similar to marriage. In our life-long journey, we must seek to know Him more intimately because our love for Him grows each day as we spend quality time with Him in prayer and Scripture. To know Christ intimately requires faithfulness and dedication in which we intentionally seek to cultivate our relationship with Him. It doesn't just happen! It takes effort and work just like a marriage. As we know Him better, we should begin to walk like Him because we have learned what He expects, desires, thinks, and how He responds. Therefore, we should live consistently in full devotion, so that we walk like He does at all times in the way we think, how we behave, and how we respond. Let us imitate our Savior and relate to Him through our walk.

Key
Question

What does it mean to walk in Christ?

1 John 2:1-2

WALK IN CHASTENESS:

Once again, John explicitly states another of his purposes in writing this letter. Addressing his audience as his **little children**, he speaks openly and intimately because together they have a strong bond of “fellowship” in Jesus ([1 John 1:3](#)). He doesn’t lecture them like an overbearing, authoritative father, but rather he warmly encourages and reminds them about their responsibilities in Christ because he loves them deeply. In [1:5-10](#), which we studied last week, John describes how we ought to exercise great care in the way we live, making sure we live with integrity in the light and not participate in **sin** in darkness. When we do **sin**, we need to confess, seek forgiveness, and repent, knowing that God will faithfully forgive and restore us. In 2:1, therefore, he picks up where he ended by stating that he has written **these things so that they may not sin**.

As followers of Christ, we ought to avoid habitually practicing **sin** and strive for perfection whereby we live according to the standard He has set in His Word. In fact, Jesus Himself commands us, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt 5:48). Too often, we sell ourselves short of this lofty goal because we believe that we can never attain it. On our own, we can’t! As a result, we often consign ourselves to living in **sin** because we just can’t help ourselves; we don’t have the will power to change. However, Christ never expects us to walk on this journey alone, but He equips and empowers us to resist temptation if we turn to Him ([1 Cor 10:13](#)). Through Christ, we should learn from our mistakes and correct our course by submitting to the leadership of His Spirit. Only in Christ can we successfully change our habits and overcome temptation so that we become more like Him every day!

In Scripture, what plan has Christ given us for overcoming temptation and not participating in sin?

Question
1

Because the enemy knows our weaknesses, he exploits them and constantly distracts us by bombarding us with temptation. To battle temptation and **sin** effectively, we should follow four principles. First, we must rely on the Lord wholly; we cannot deceive ourselves into thinking that we can face the enemy on our own. Apart from Christ, we cannot overcome temptation and be reconciled to **the Father**. Therefore, we must

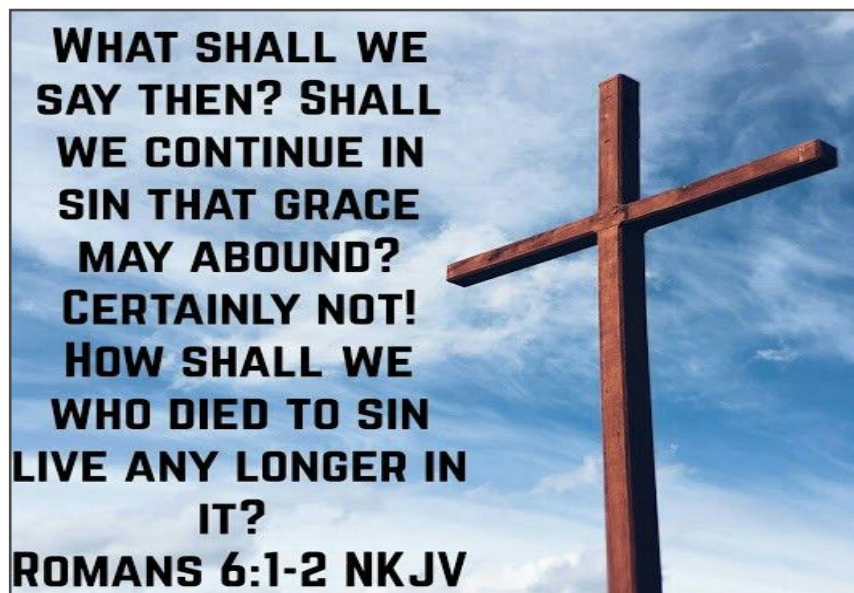
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constantly pray and seek the Lord without ceasing so that we might know beforehand how we ought to respond to a tempting situation when it arises ([1 Thess 5:17](#)). Then, when a tempting situation does arise, we immediately turn to Christ instinctively without hesitation so He can strengthen us; we don't entertain the thought in our mind, debating what we should do! Thus, Jesus teaches us in the model prayer that we should pray God would empower us to overcome sin and temptation: "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" ([Matt 6:13](#)).

Second, we must know the truth found in God's Word which helps us distinguish right from wrong ([1 John 2:14](#)). Failure to know the truth is no excuse; we are still guilty if we **sin**. Yet, we can't recognize **sin** if we don't spend time in Scripture ([Matt 4:4](#)). Third, we should avoid tempting situations when possible and consistently renew our minds by thinking on things which are holy and godly ([1 Thess 5:22](#); [Rom 12:1-2](#); [Phil 4:8-9](#)). Finally, we must practice accountability by spurring on one another to maturity in Christ ([James 5:16](#)). Certainly, we should pray for one another, but we can also encourage each other by walking through life together and being present in an increasingly isolated world. At times, this requires our physical presence if at all possible to help extricate the person from a tempting situation and provide a stronger measure of accountability and encouragement. For this reason, we must also prepare ourselves spiritually lest we also stumble in temptation ([Gal 6:1](#)).

How should we practice biblical accountability in the church today?

Question
2



Because we still live in the flesh which has not yet been perfected ([1 John 3:2](#)), we all will **sin** and make mistakes at times. To deny this fact means that we deceive ourselves and make God a liar ([1 John 1:8, 10](#)). Yet, as John has already pointed out, Christ will forgive and cleanse us when we "confess our sins" ([1 John 1:9](#)). Therefore, **we have an Advocate**

with the Father who intercedes on our behalf when (**if anyone sins**): Jesus who is **righteous** (v. 1). In this context, John is speaking particularly to believers. On the one hand, this doesn't give us a license to **sin** freely and abuse grace, knowing that He will forgive us ([Rom 6:1-2](#)). On the other hand, it does reassure us that when we do **sin the Father** will forgive us and restore us into right relationship; hence, we don't lose our salvation, but in Christ we can have our fellowship restored.

If we continue to sin knowingly, how does that abuse grace? Why is Christ's assurance of forgiveness not a license to sin?

Question
3

Just as Christ offers forgiveness to believers when we **sin**, He extends forgiveness to **the whole world** by inviting them to have a relationship with Him. In verse 2, John uses the term **propitiation** with which many may not be familiar; it simply means that Jesus took upon Himself the wrath of God and penalty for **our sins** so that we wouldn't have to endure it ([2 Cor 5:21](#)); in Christ, we no longer face God's wrath, but we have been made right with Him ([Rom 5:1](#)). Through Jesus' death on the cross, we can receive forgiveness for **our sins**. When John says that Jesus **is the propitiation for the whole world**, he doesn't mean that everyone will be saved regardless of their response. On the contrary, forgiveness in Christ is available to all, but not all accept it. Only those who accept it by their personal choice by confessing and repenting of their **sins** will have eternal life in Christ.

1 John 2:3-5

WALK IN HIS COMMANDMENTS:

After explaining how we ought to mature in our walk with Christ by overcoming sin, John **now** demonstrates how **we** can **know** for sure that we have a relationship with Him (v. 3). He reveals that **we know**, or have a relationship with, Christ **if we keep His commandments**. This concept comes directly from Jesus' teaching when He asserts, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). As Christ's followers, we should practice obedience in the same way that He showed us by following the Father's plan. For this reason, John distinguishes between the ones who have deceived themselves into thinking they have a relationship with Christ and those who truly do. The one who claims to **know** Christ and **does not keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him** (v. 4). A true follower would adhere to God's **Word** obediently. Therefore, John argues that **whoever keeps His Word** can **know** that they have a relationship

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with **Him** (v. 5).

As we learned from the previous section ([1 John 2:1-2](#)), this doesn't mean that we won't



err at times, but it means that we will not constantly live in a state of habitual sin. Consequently, we can have tangible evidence manifested in our lives to which we can point that we belong to the Lord as His children. That evidence is we will exercise obedience to Him in every area of our lives! This isn't a legalistic adherence to the law as if by obeying it we can be saved;

neither do we obey because we get special favor or privilege in return. The blessings that God bestows upon us are a bonus! We practice obedience because **the love of God** has been **truly perfected in** us. In other words, we obey God because we **love** Him for the great **love** which He has shown us by reconciling us with Him!

In what ways do we show love to others?
How can some of these examples of showing love to others be translated into showing love for God?

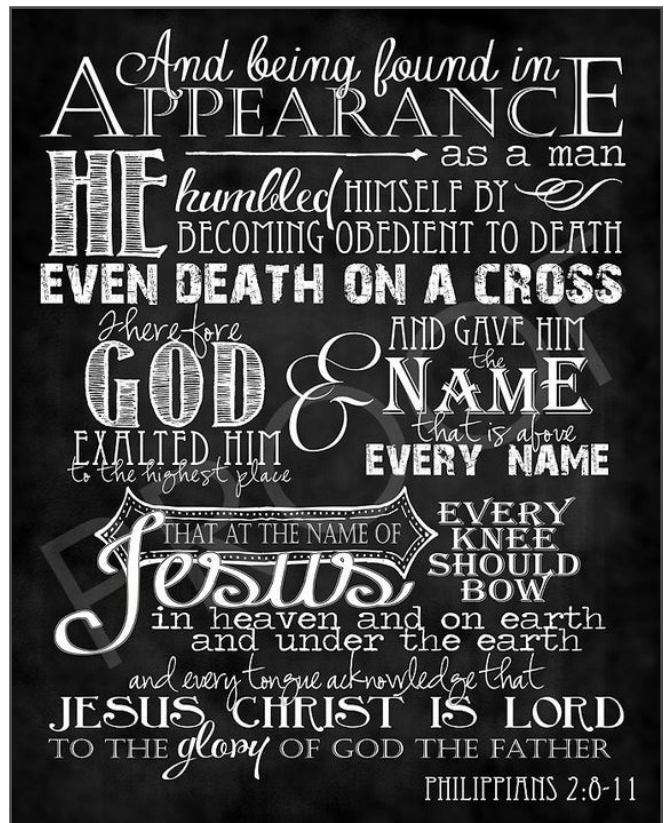
Question
4

In some ways, we do a disservice to our children today because we often teach them to obey, and respect others, because of what they can get. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with rewarding children for obedience and proper behavior, we must do it in the right way! Indeed, God rewards or blesses us when we obey! If we don't reinforce the right motive for behavior, in the right way however, it can lead to disastrous results because children will come to expect a reward *every* time. In the absence of a reward, then no external stimuli or reason exists for the children to obey. In other words, why would they obey if they don't receive something in return every time? Hence, the dilemma of our society today: What's in it for me?

In a world in which morality has become relative, it can be hard to teach obedience. It's not about being true to oneself as our society puts it, but it's about doing the right thing according to an objective standard identified by the Lord. Consequently, we

don't do the right thing because of what we get or because society approves; we do the right thing because it honors Christ and reflects His character. We should follow His example! Certainly, we can reward and praise children for their obedience at times, but the best way to teach them is to show them in our own lives. We need to show humility and respect for others by acting with integrity and living according to the truth at all times; this includes treating children with love and respect even when they err. Christ does with us!

When we look at Christ's example, we find that He first taught the principles by which we should live verbally from Scripture, but then He lived consistently by them; He applied them and displayed them in His own life for us to follow. We cannot separate the verbal instruction from the practical example; we need both! In dealing with the religious leaders of His day, Jesus taught them from Scripture first and at the same time showed great respect and love; yet, He never wavered from the truth. Moreover, Christ showed His **love** for the Father through His obedience—not because of what He got, but because He loved Him and us. In the end, Jesus' obedience led to death upon the cross; however, it triumphantly resulted in His resurrection from the dead. What an example in **love** that we should imitate!



Why should our love for God motivate us to obey?

Question # 5

1 John 2:6-7

WALK AS CHRIST:

Because we love Him, we will obey what He has commanded and **walk just as He** did (v. 6). Thus, John notes that the one **who says he abides in Christ ought also to walk just as He** did. Again, this reflects the teaching that John heard directly from Christ. Therefore, he explains that he does not **write a new commandment, but an old commandment which they have had from the beginning** (v. 7). This is such an

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important point that he emphasizes it again: **the commandment is the word which they heard from the beginning**. During His last Passover meal with the disciples before His crucifixion, Jesus reminds them, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:10). In 1 John 2:6, the Apostle expresses the same concept with different wording: follow Christ’s example!

Many of us may remember playing the game “Simon Says” as a child in which we had to listen for the key phrase and then perform the appropriate action: “Simon says, ‘Bark like a dog.’” If we didn’t hear the phrase, “Simon says,” then we shouldn’t perform the request. Thus, the game required two practical skills: 1) we had to listen carefully and 2) we had to follow or do what was said at the right time. Although abiding in Christ and obeying Him isn’t any game, it does require the same two skills. First, we must listen to Him carefully; we must learn to distinguish His voice from others, including our own desires. Jesus even points out, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:27). Second, we must do what Christ has commanded us; we must obey!

How can we distinguish the voice of Christ from other voices that may distract us?

Question
6

John will expand upon this principle through the rest of the letter by giving us practical ways that we ought to walk as Christ did. First, we should live righteously and not practice sin ([2:15-17](#); [3:4-15](#)). Second, we should love others, whether our relatives,



friends, fellow believers, or even our enemies ([2:8-11](#); [3:1-3, 16-23](#)). Our love, however, ought to start with God and flow from Him to others whom He has placed in our lives ([chpt. 4](#)). Finally, we must hold to the truth of His Word and not deviate from it, especially in the face of doctrinal errors and misunderstanding by the world ([4:1-3](#); [5:1-13, 18-20](#)). Christ calls

us to live with integrity in which we **walk** consistently by imitating Him. To do this, we must abide or remain in Him: “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me” (John 15:4).

As John has explained thus far in this chapter, we can know that we belong to the Father by what type of fruit that we bear in our **walk** with Christ. In [John 15](#), even though Jesus doesn’t explicitly state it, we know from commonsense that a branch produces a specific fruit that matches the type of fruit from the main vine. A watermelon vine, for example, doesn’t produce cantaloupes. In the same way, if we are a true branch in Christ, then we will produce fruit which matches His righteousness. We will not produce works of sin and darkness. In Christ, therefore, we have a visible example of how to live. Eyewitnesses saw that His teaching matched His lifestyle, so we don’t have to guess at His expectations or try to figure things out by trial and error. We can know for sure because we can see how He lived!

Prayerfully examine your life. What kind of fruit do you produce?

Question
7

Just as Jesus provided a witness by His **walk**, we also need to relate to others positively by our **walk**. We need to be a positive example for the world to follow, so that we might testify to Christ and point others into a relationship with Him. Therefore, we need to allow others to see Christ in us in the way that we live! As a result, let us **walk** in chasteness or righteousness whereby we always live in integrity and not participate in sin. Let us **walk** in obedience to His **commandments** in the same way that Christ did. When our actions match our words and others can see Christ in us, then we will be a positive witness to the world of the transformation that He produces within us!

In the introduction, we met Robert and Beth who had been married fifty years. During that time, they actively sought to know each other better and to grow together in unity. Their key to a successful marriage was no secret: Christ was the center. Although they had their differences and went through tough times together, they overcame obstacles together in Christ by imitating Him in their marriage. On their own, their marriage might have worked alright by chance, but in Christ it succeeded with certainty! To accomplish this, they spent time in God's Word and prayer daily; they knew what Christ expected and imitated how He lived. It wasn't easy, but they never quit; when they made a mistake, they always sought reconciliation and readily forgave one another just as they had been individually forgiven by Christ.

Too often, we go through life by trial and error when we have a clear roadmap which gives us specific directives how we should live. Just as no marriage is perfect and both partners will err at times, we will make mistakes in life. It's how we respond to those times that define us as a follower of Christ. In our figurative marriage with Christ, He is perfect and always faithful; He never moves or strays from us. However, we break fellowship with Him when we sin and disobey. When that happens, what do we do? We should confess our sins, allow Him to cleanse and restore us, and learn from our mistakes so that we can mature in Him and walk more closely with Him by imitating His righteousness. When we pattern our lives after Him even though we are imperfect, we know that we belong to Him and we can relate that witness and walk positively to others!

Incorporate

How do we know we belong to Christ? To what evidence can you point in your own life that you have a relationship with Him?

What should our motivation be for obedience to the Lord's commands? How does the Spirit help us in this endeavor to obey?

Prayerfully examine your life. Write the ways in which you imitate Christ here. In what ways do you need to improve or imitate Him more closely?

February 16, 2020



Relate through the Word

1 John 2:8-14

Focal Verse:

"I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one."

1 John 2:14

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Introduce

In 2004, I had the opportunity to participate in my first international mission trip to Kenya and Tanzania. Flying over the Sahara Desert at night, I had never experienced such an absence of light as human settlements were few and far between. As we crossed into Sub-Saharan Africa, I could still see a stark contrast between the urban and rural areas which had little, if any electric lights; however, I wouldn't know the pervasiveness of the darkness until I traveled into the rural areas to experience it for myself from the ground level. After the rest of the mission team had already returned to the US, I stayed with Chacha Mwita and his family to continue ministering. One afternoon, we went to visit one of his relatives well outside of the small town of Migori, Kenya where we were staying. At that time, no electricity had yet made it that far outside of town. When we arrived, the sun was shining brightly and we could see with ease. According to East African custom, the host would serve a full meal to their guests which would take substantial time to prepare, meaning that we would most likely leave after sunset.



As the sun began to set, the family had just started to bring in a delicious meal for us to eat, but the only light in the entire house came from the coals that burned slowly under the cooking pot. At the same time, a thick layer of clouds had overtaken the sky and completely obscured the moon and any source of light. We hadn't prepared for the possibility of having no light at all; all our flashlights were still stored in the car! As it came time to leave, we quickly realized how dark it had become. We peered from the house toward the direction in which we had thought we parked the car, but we couldn't see it. We couldn't see anything: people, plants, trees, or man-made structures. We had no sense of direction!

So, we all decided to fan out and walk in different directions until we found the car—literally by running into it. Whoever found the car first would flip on the headlights so that everyone else could see. On the way, we unknowingly ran into all kinds of obstacles; we ran into trees, stumbled over rocks, and even bumped into each other.

Introduce

Eventually, someone made it to the car and turned on the lights so that we could see and regain our sense of direction. That night, we learned how much we needed light to see and to have confidence in the direction we were going so that we didn't stumble. In [1 John 2:8-14](#), John tells us that if we hate others we walk in darkness and whoever walks in darkness "does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (2:11). Fortunately, God has given us light in His Word and if we abide in it then we will never stumble because we will have clear direction. For this reason, the psalmist can exclaim, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). As followers of Christ, we need to relate the Word of God by reflecting it in our lives through a changed outlook, by connecting with others, and by continuing in obedience. Let us, therefore, abide in the Word and demonstrate our love for Christ to the world through our obedience to Him.

Key
Question

What does it mean that God's Word abides in us?

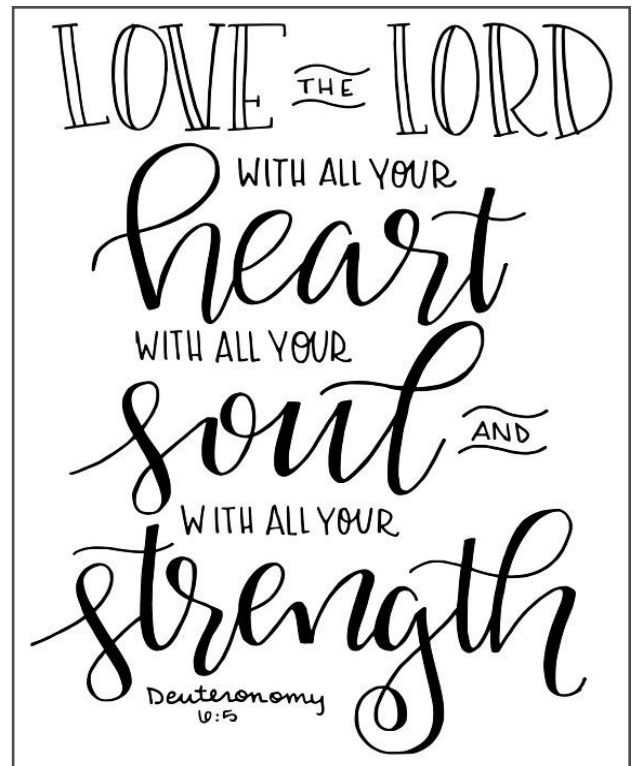
1 John 2:8

A WORD WHICH CHANGES OUR OUTLOOK:

Last week, we saw that John concluded the previous section by reminding us that we should follow an “old commandment which [we] have heard from the beginning” (v. 7). From [1 John 2:5](#), we learned that this **commandment** bids us to express our love to God through our obedience to Him, but John will now explain that we also express it by loving others (v. 8). Since love is the very essence of God’s being and character ([1 John 4:16](#)), from the beginning of creation He has communicated to us the importance of loving Him first and then loving others. In fact, Jesus summarizes the entire Old Testament in two succinct statements: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind’ . . . and the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” ([Matt 22:27-39](#); [Deut 6:5](#); [Lev 19:18](#)). In this way, neither Jesus or John is telling us something novel we haven’t heard

before, but they are reminding us of the very foundation of our belief and the basis of our relationship with the Lord!

Now, however, John seemingly contradicts himself by arguing that he also writes a **new commandment** to them **which is true in Him and in them** (v. 8). How can this **commandment** be both “old” and “new” at the same time? In actuality, John doesn’t contradict himself, but rather he establishes how this **commandment** finds **new** and fuller expression in Christ (**in Him**) who has come into the world to provide salvation for everyone who will accept it. Through this sacrificial act and His own personal example throughout His life, we can more fully understand the concept of love because we have a visible example of love demonstrated **in Him**. Moreover, this **commandment** also finds fuller expression in us because God has sent His Spirit to indwell our hearts which enables us to exercise this same unselfish and unconditional love. Therefore, Jesus tells His disciples, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have



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loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34). In this way, Jesus has taken an old principle and invested it with **new** understanding by calling us to follow His example in showing love at a higher level.

How does God show love throughout the Old Testament? What specific examples can you give?

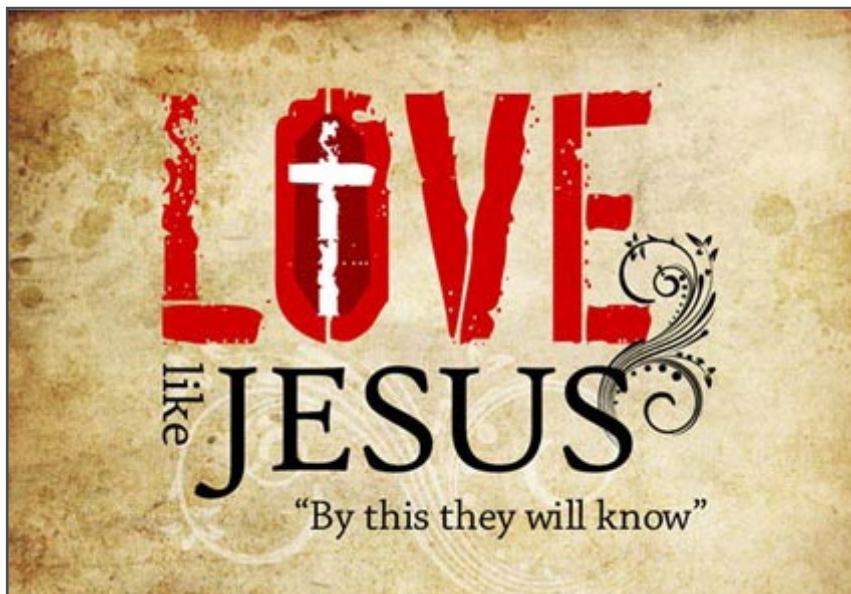
Question
1

We live in a society that values novelty and innovation over tradition. With the rapid development of new technologies, we tend to grow weary and lose interest in the things we consider obsolete. Many bounce from experience to experience, seeking something fun and exciting. When the excitement fades, they immediately look for something else to fill the void. In this way, our society has developed a disdain for tradition because they regard it as outdated and useless. Yet, John attempts to help his audience, as well as us, to see the value in what God has advocated from the beginning. As a result, this **commandment** to love God and love others never grows old and out-of-date because it continues to find **new** and fuller expression in us as followers of Christ. Therefore, we ought to seek to imitate His love daily in the way we serve the Lord and treat others ([Eph 5:1-2](#)).

In what ways do we see our society express disdain for tradition? Why is not all tradition necessarily bad?

Question
2

Through His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus performed the greatest act of love



that mankind has experienced or ever will. During the last Passover meal He shared with His disciples, Jesus reminded them, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). Yet, as we learn from Paul, Christ didn’t die only for His “friends,” but He died for the ungodly and unrighteous; He died for the whole world ([John 3:16](#))!

For this reason, Paul writes, “For scarcely a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:7-8). In Christ, we now have a pattern to follow because we know what true love looks like! His love ought to transform us so radically that others can see a tangible difference in our lives; the world ought to see a supernatural love which can only come from Christ. Consequently, this **new** and greater understanding of love in Christ should change our outlook because our love for God and others should become the basis for everything we do. Without **the true light** having come into the world, we could not fully comprehend what it means to love. Through Scripture, we can observe how love motivated Jesus and became the basis for everything He did. For instance, Jesus’ love compelled Him to obey His Father in heaven ([John 5:20; 15:10](#)), redeem the world through His sacrificial death on the cross ([John 14:31; Phil 2:8](#)), reveal salvation to the lost even if they don’t accept His gracious gift ([Mark 10:21](#)), extend forgiveness to His opponents ([Luke 10:21; Eph 4:32](#)), offer compassion to the grieving and hurting ([John 11:5](#)), convict and correct His followers when we err ([Heb 12:5-6](#)), and help us to grow and mature in our walk ([John 17:23](#)). In all, never once did He fail in His unconditional love for His followers, seeing them through persecution and granting them eternal life in Him ([John 13:1](#)). Just as love motivated Jesus in everything that He did, we should also reflect that same type of sacrificial and unconditional love in our own lives. Above all, the love of God manifested in us should define us, showing that we belong to Christ!

How should Christ’s example transform our love?

Question
3

Because of His great love for His creation, Christ defeated sin and death through His once-and-for-all sacrifice, offering life to everyone who will accept it. Therefore, John explains that **the darkness is passing away** and **the true light is already shining** (v. 8). Thus, Paul can state, “But [grace] has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim 1:10). Although Christ has permanently defeated sin and death for all who accept His plan, the effects of **darkness** still remain in the world at large because we await His return to establish His kingdom in full in which He will completely remove sin. At present, God has delayed the Son’s return so that people might have a chance to hear the gospel, repent, and have eternal life ([2 Peter 3:9](#)). As a

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result, we are faced with a choice: do we follow the path of **darkness** which is perishing and leads to destruction or do we follow the **true light** who gives life abundantly? Therefore, we must intentionally choose **light** over **darkness** and order our lives by the pattern He has set in the way He lived to which now John will give a specific example in the verses that follow.

1 John 2:9-11

A WORD WHICH CONNECTS WITH OTHERS:

The fundamental problem of sin and **darkness** is selfishness; we love ourselves more



than we love God which in turn causes dysfunction in our human relationships too because we view things in terms of our own desires. This self-centeredness doesn't reflect the sacrificial love which Christ displayed, so those who cannot love others sacrificially and unconditionally remain in **darkness** and have no fellowship with the Lord. For this reason,

John notes that the one **who says he is in the light**, yet **hates his brother**, remains in **darkness until now** (v. 9). We cannot love God and hate our **brother**; if we truly have the love of Christ in our hearts, He will not allow us to do so. Instead, the one who has a relationship with Christ and **abides in the light** will love **his brother** (v. 10). If we consistently hate others and have dysfunctional relationships caused by our own selfishness, we must assess whether we even have a relationship with Christ. Certainly, we ought to love our enemies as Jesus taught us ([Matt 5:43-47](#)), but here John refers to those with whom we have a close relationship. Most of us probably find it easy to love someone who shows love to us; even then, however, we will still have arguments and experience difficulty in our relationships at times because we live in a fallen world. Therefore, the extent of God's love residing in us becomes most evident in how we respond when we endure hardships, when we have disagreements, when someone mistreats us, and when we don't get our way. We shouldn't respond in anger,

vengeance, or retaliation. We shouldn't hold grudges and allow bitterness to consume our lives, but we should continue to love and forgive others even if they don't come and apologize to us first ([Eph 4:32](#)). We must see others through the eyes of Christ and love others unconditionally just as He loved us. This doesn't mean that we intentionally subject ourselves to harmful or hurtful situations. On the contrary, it means that we should turn to the Lord when we face difficult situations so that His love can flow through us and lead the other person to reconciliation in Him.

How can loving someone lead them to reconciliation in Christ? Why doesn't reconciliation always occur when we love others?

Question
4

When we truly love someone, we should learn to resolve our differences constructively and not allow the sun to set on our anger, giving the devil a foothold ([Eph 4:26-27](#)). This may require us to admit that we were wrong or erred, to extend forgiveness to those who wronged us, or to compromise in matters that are not sinful or immoral. By displaying unconditional love in our lives, John reiterates **there is no cause for stumbling** (v. 10). Unconditional love doesn't mean that we affirm or accept whatever another person does or says without evaluating it by Scripture. On the contrary, we must reject sin and speak the truth in love! Rather, unconditional love means that we put aside our personal preferences and desires to seek the will of the Lord, so that the church may grow and mature together. At the heart of most dysfunction and bitterness lies personal opinion and



preference—not doctrinal error or immorality. If we have a relationship with Christ, our personal preferences become secondary to our love for Him expressed through our obedience to His will which enables us to elevate and meet the needs of others based on the love which He has given us in Him.

When we live **in the light** and practice love, it has two positive benefits. First, we will not stumble in sin ourselves by harboring bitterness and allowing anger to morph into revenge or even deceit ([Rom 12:17-21](#)). Second, we will not cause others in the

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church to stumble by presenting them with an opportunity to become angry or to take sides on an issue, but we will help one another to see through the eyes of Christ when making a decision. If everyone looks to Christ first when making a decision, **there** will be **no cause for stumbling** at all. More importantly, dissension and arguing in the church has a negative influence on our testimony in the world. We want to draw others into a relationship with Christ, not repel them. If the world sees bickering and animosity among members of the church, they will not be able to distinguish a follower of Christ from a member of the world; if they both act the same, what would draw unbelievers to Christ? We must set an example among unbelievers in how we handle and respond to disagreements in the church among fellow believers with love!

How can we cause others to stumble when we're angry or elevate our personal preferences above the will of the Lord?

Question
5

Above all, those who live in unrestrained hatred walk **in darkness** and do **not know where** they are **going because the darkness has blinded their eyes** (v. 11). Uncontrolled hatred along with unresolved anger causes spiritual blindness in several ways by hindering our walk with Christ and causing us to stumble. First, rage and hatred can consume our lives in which we can only think about how others have wronged us and we constantly replay the event in our mind; we may lose sleep, have higher levels of stress, and experience other physical side effects caused by



anxiety. Furthermore, it often leads us to plot revenge and get even. Second, in carrying such negative baggage, it can hurt our relationships with other people not even involved. We can become more cynical and jaded, mistrusting others and even projecting our anger and frustration upon them. Take a moment and think about time that you had a major disagreement with your spouse; often your children, and sometimes

even a close friend, can unwittingly become the recipient of your ire! Hatred and bitterness, therefore, will also derail our relationship with the Lord because we know from Scripture that acting on such feelings is sinful, so we don't pray about the matter or we pray in a selfish way according to our own desires. At times, we may even blame God for what happened and turn away from Him. Finally, we become self-centered in our outlook in which we will only forgive the person if he or she initiates the reconciliation and asks for forgiveness or apologizes. Imagine if Christ waited for us to initiate reconciliation rather than coming to redeem us ([Rom 3:10-12](#))! When we no longer seek to reconcile fellowship, we will always look for the negative in the other person and will never identify the positive; we will often seek to put them down in front of others so that we can elevate ourselves and get people to take pity on us for having been wronged.

In what ways can hatred and anger harm our relationship with other people not involved?

Question
6

When we allow anger and hatred to consume us, we can't see **where** we are **going** because we are constantly looking at the past. We become fixated on a few events that define us as a person and shape our outlook instead of allowing God's love to define us. Although we can't force someone to reconcile with us, we must be willing to forgive and move forward. We should continue to love those people and treat them respectfully with kindness even if they don't reciprocate. This won't be easy, or even natural, but it will demonstrate the love of Christ to the person as well as to the rest of the world. Think about how the Lord treats us. He doesn't force us to reconcile with Him, but He continues to love us despite our sin and He always stands ready to forgive according to His grace and mercy. Let us not tolerate or enable immorality, but let us love like God by extending grace and offering forgiveness, so that we might have righteous and holy relationships in Christ.

What does Christ-like forgiveness look like in our lives?

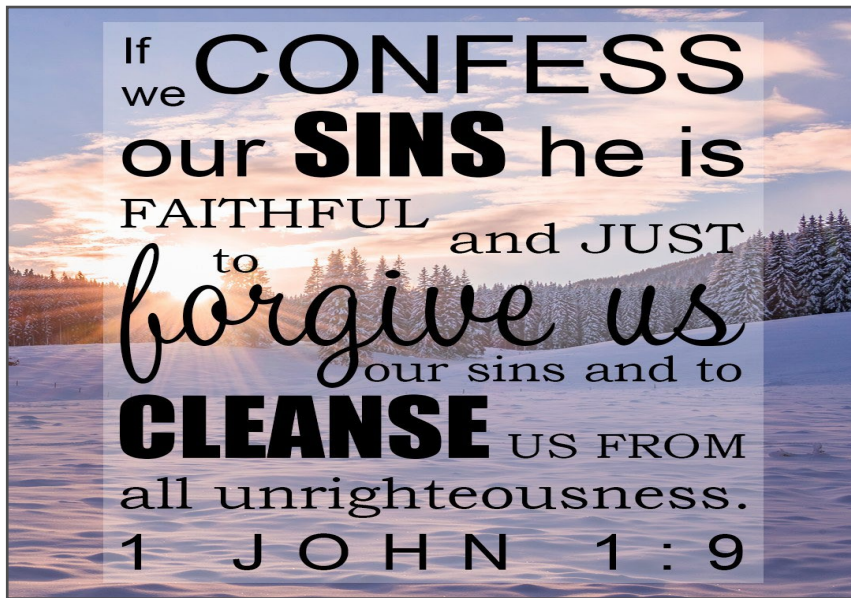
Question
7

1 John 2:12-14

A WORD WHICH CONTINUES IN OBEDIENCE:

Having described believers' transition from **darkness** to **light** demonstrated through

a profound Christ-like love, John reminds us of our spiritual blessings we now have in



Christ as well as the responsibilities we have received when we continue in obedience. He specifically addresses three groups within the church: **children**, **fathers**, and **young men**. He uses these three groups as a way to refer to the church as a whole. The blessings and responsibilities, therefore, overlap and apply to each of these three groups and

are not exclusive to the one with which he specifically mentions them. For example, he reveals that he writes **to the little children because** their **sins** have been **forgiven for His name's sake** (v. 12). This statement applies to the **fathers** and **young men** as well; therefore, it serves as a reminder to the entire church of the blessing of their right relationship in Christ. Since they have confessed their sins, God has faithfully cleansed them of all unrighteousness and restored them into right relationship with Him!

In the next two verses, John repeats a few phrases to emphasize the status of their personal relationship with Christ. **Because** they have received forgiveness for their sins, they now have a restored relationship with the Lord and **have known Him who is from the beginning** (vv. 13-14). Through that relationship with Christ, they **have overcome the wicked one** and **are strong** since **the Word of God abides in** them (v. 14). To **overcome the wicked one**, we must know **the Word of God** and apply it in our lives daily. This means that we should study and meditate on it, so that the Lord can help us recall and apply it in any tempting situation that we may face ([Matt 4:4](#)). Problems, however, will abound and multiply when we don't know God's Word and fail to practice the principles by which He has given us to live.

In order to know the right path to take and not be consumed and disoriented by darkness, we need to know the truth of God's Word. Scripture is the only source of objective truth that we have and we must evaluate everything in our lives by it. By reading a roadmap, for instance, we can know the direction we ought to go for certain! When we stop and ask directions from someone, however, we may or may not be led

correctly. Without a roadmap, we have nothing to evaluate whether the directions that were given are true. The Bible is our roadmap; we shouldn't depend upon human philosophy or opinion to guide us. We must evaluate everything according to that which we know to be true! Therefore, let us know God's Word and allow it to penetrate our hearts so that we abide in it—applying it and living by its holy standards so that we continue in obedience to the Lord and live as His holy ambassadors among a dark and depraved generation.

How often do you study God's Word? Why is it important to memorize as much of God's Word as possible?

Question
8

In the introduction, we saw how the absence of physical light can make finding one's way almost impossible as it greatly increases the risk of stumbling and falling. By trial and error, thankfully avoiding any injury, we eventually found our vehicle in utter darkness. Fortunately, we don't have to go through life by trial and error because we have the true light of the world to show us the way! Christ has shown us the right way to have salvation and fellowship with the Father through His sacrificial death on the cross. When we have fellowship with the Lord, we can have godly fellowship with each other because we will walk in the light by living in love!

Because we still live in a fallen world, we will continue to face problems and have to deal with strained relationships at times. The way in which we deal with those strained relationships will define us as a follower of Christ. Instead of responding with anger, bitterness, and hatred which is the way in which those who live in darkness respond, we must imitate the love and forgiveness that Christ has shown us! To love unconditionally doesn't mean that we should accept sin and affirm someone's immoral choices. On the contrary, we should point them to God's Word which corrects. To love unconditionally, therefore, means that we continue to love and forgive people even when they err by pointing them to the Lord who reconciles and redeems. Therefore, let us relate to others through the living Word who transforms and enables us to love supernaturally. Let us connect others to Christ as we continue in obedience by following the principles He has outlined in His Word so that others may see Christ in us.

Incorporate

How should the love of Christ change our outlook or perspective as a church? What does that new perspective look like?

In FBCFW, how should the love of Christ connect us to others in a tangible way? What would happen if the secular community saw how much we love each other?

As a believer, how do we know that the Word of God abides in us? When the Word of God abides in us, how does it affect our relationship with the Lord first and others second?

February 23, 2020



Relate Not to the World

1 John 2:15-20

Focal Verse:

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

1 John 2:15

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Introduce

Hebert R. Sportsman loved to participate in anything that involved any type of activity—it didn't matter what kind of sport. His eldest son also inherited his passion for sports and tried to sign-up for every team whether at school or in the community. As a child, when Herbert participated in sports, practices and games never occurred on Sundays and Wednesdays, unless an occasional pick-up game in the local park or community center during the afternoon. So, he faithfully attended church with his parents



every week. Herbert eventually accepted Christ as his Savior and began a personal relationship with Him. Although he loved sports, he loved to worship and serve in the local church even more! He couldn't always make *every* service project, but he always prayerfully considered which ones that God would have him participate.

As Hebert grew older and began his own family, he wanted to instill this love for Christ in his children. At first, they met as a family daily for Bible study and prayer, but as the children grew older they became involved in more extracurricular activities. With the hecticness of life, Bible study became an afterthought; it became so sporadic that it eventually ceased altogether because they couldn't really find any time where they could meet together as a family. Even worse, they really never set aside time for a personal quiet time nor did they hold one another accountable in spending time with the Lord.

When the children became old enough to participate in sports, Herbert and his family faced another crisis. Because the majority of people participating in sports didn't have a relationship with Christ, many of the games now occurred on weekends with practices and activities on almost every night of the week—including Wednesday. With his passion for sports, Herbert at first didn't see anything wrong forgoing worship and serving in the church. His son, in particular, was involved in so many activities that they had something almost every weekend. When they had the rare Sunday off, they still didn't worship corporately as the church. They decided to relax and sleep late. Worship

Introduce

and service then became exceedingly rare.

Even though Herbert wanted his children to have a personal relationship with Christ and would want the same for his grandchildren when he would have them, his love of sports at the expense of a personal, daily relationship with Christ would send future generations of Sportsman the wrong message and teach them the wrong lesson. Therefore, we have to be extremely careful that we don't allow the world to influence us where we love it and its things more than we show devotion and love to our heavenly Father. For this reason, John warns, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (2:15).

There is nothing inherently wrong with sports and many other hobbies, but they become sin when they distract us in our personal relationship with the Lord and cause us to stumble in our walk. Throughout 1 John, John teaches us how to impact and influence the world rather than allowing the world to impact and influence us. We are bombarded on every side today with opportunities to love the things of this world, but we cannot allow them to distract us in our walk. Therefore, we should not relate to the things of the world in a way in which it elevates them over Christ!

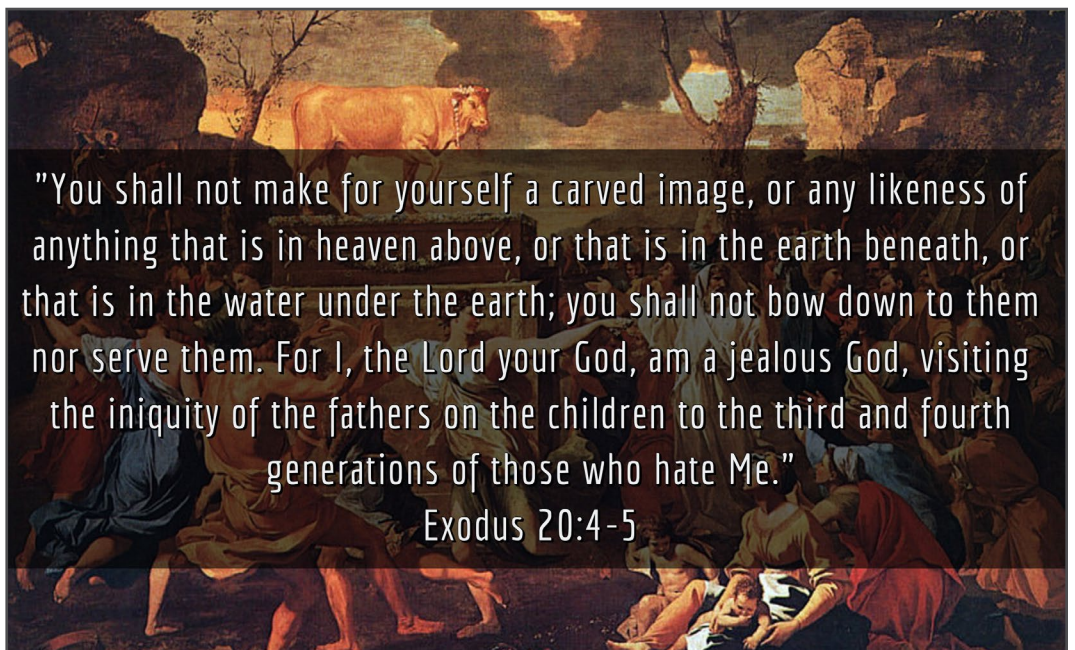
Key
Question

How can the love of the things of the world slowly drive us further from the Lord in a way in which we might be unaware?

1 John 2:15-17

REFUSE THE WORLD:

Having reminded believers to show their love for God through their obedience and by loving others, John now turns to the central part of his argument which implores us **not to love the world or the things in the world** (v. 15). In the Old Testament, we would call this idolatry in which we worship man-made things rather than the Creator Himself ([Exod 20:3-6](#)). In this context, as John defines it in verse 16, **the world** refers to our selfish, sinful desires which conflict with the will of the Lord and cause us to act in defiant disobedience. Put simply, we walk in “darkness” because we want our evil deeds hidden rather than revealed or exposed ([John 3:19-20](#)). When we walk in “darkness,” John makes it clear that **the love of the Father is not in us**. For just as Jesus teaches about wealth, we cannot serve two masters; we will hate one and **love** the other ([Matt 6:24](#)). In the same way, we can apply Jesus’ teaching here in 1 John; we cannot **love** both God and **the world** because we will end up loving one and hating the other! In dating, a woman in her right mind wouldn’t continue seeing a man who claims to have love and affection for her as well as another woman at the same time. Besides being wrong biblically and morally, jealousy, envy, strife, and bitterness would characterize the relationships because naturally the man would show affection more to one woman than the other! Similarly, we cannot **love** both God and **the world** because we will wind up showing more **love to the things of the world** which only offer temporary joy and satisfaction, but always lead to misery and destruction. In [Exod 20:5](#), the Lord even declares that we should not worship any other god because “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.” He isn’t jealous in terms of the human



emotion of which we may think, but rather He is unique, one-of-a-kind! There is no one else like Him and He alone deserves all our **love** and devotion.

How can we show our love and devotion to the Lord? How can even the good things He created cause us to sin?

Question
1

In verse 16, John further explains the allure of **the world** and why it so easily ensnares and distracts us in our relationship with Christ if we don't pay careful attention. Because mankind has subjected all creation to destruction through his sin, John contends **that all in the world is not of the Father**. Although God created the physical world and everything in it in perfect order, man ruined it when he disobeyed and sinned. In an attempt to control his own fate, mankind rejected the truth of God for a lie by worshiping created things rather than the Lord ([Rom 1:25](#)). In sinning, mankind even tried to elevate himself into the position which rightly belongs only to God; in essence, then we become the center of our lives.

In his enticement of Eve, the serpent slyly suggests, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and *you will be like God*, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:4-5). Later in Isaiah 14:14, the king of Babylon makes a similar assertion about his position when he boasts, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, *I will be like the Most High*." The appeal of **the world**, then, is that we can choose for ourselves and follow our own desires in control of our own destiny rather than submit to the plan of God. This may seem to work for a while, but in the end it always fails and leads to destruction. As Americans, we can best understand this mindset because we value our independence and personal sovereignty; we want to plot our own course in life! When we do this without God, however, we face utter disaster because we will always make the wrong decisions!

In what ways can the world distract us? How can we maintain focus on Christ?

Question
2

John, therefore, describes the evil this **world** promotes with two phrases: **the lust of the eyes** and **the pride of life**. First, the phrase **lust of the eyes** doesn't only refer to sexual immorality or indiscretion, but it certainly includes this type of sin; it simply means that we surrender to our own selfish desires because they look appealing and

satisfying to us. For example, in the garden, Eve became enamored with the fruit because she “saw that the tree was good for food, that it was *pleasant for the eyes*, and a tree *desirable to make one wise*” so she ate of it ([Gen 3:6](#)). Each of us struggle with different areas that we find appealing whether possessions, power, prestige, physical lust, or a whole host of cravings and desires that we entertain. Most of us lack self-discipline on our own to resist these desires which we then allow to grow into insatiable appetites. Even if nothing is inherently sinful about the object which we desire, we turn it into sin when we allow that desire to consume our time and focus, replacing our focus that should rightly be placed upon Christ.



What things do you find desirable in life? How do they fit in with the will of the Lord?

Question
3

Second, John describes the pervasive sin of this **world** as **the pride of life**. The word translated **pride** can also mean “boasting” or “self-confidence.” In this sense, sin causes us to boast in ourselves rather than glorify the Lord. In [1 Corinthians 1:31](#), Paul quotes [Jeremiah 9:24](#) which asserts, “He who glories [boasts], let him glory in the Lord.” Although these are two different words in Greek, they both carry the same idea: God should receive the praise for who He is and what He has done—not us! As humans, we tend to boast in our accomplishments, our abilities, and our possessions in order to promote what we ourselves have achieved rather than acknowledging the Lord has blessed us with these skills, talents, or things!

Many centuries ago, a king paced in his palace as he looked out surveying the kingdom over which he reigned. With his chest protruding in a stately position, he held the lapels of his royal raiment with his hands and admired how vast his territory was and how much he had conquered. As he looked around his palace, he couldn’t help but to compare it to other grand structures he had seen around the world. He had the most-beautiful and opulent palace filled with the most-expensive possessions; no

one could even come close to having such a structure and so many fine things. He



smiled as he thought about how the educational system he had established was the greatest in the world. His kingdom had the most-educated citizens thanks to him. He turned to observe the bustling marketplace which teemed with business because he had created the best economy in the world so that his nation could boast the wealthiest citizens.

Never once did this king acknowledge that the Lord enabled him to have such blessings! He had done all these things himself—or so he thought. Probably most of us have heard this story previously. We know this king by the name of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon who had to learn the hard way that the Lord was the source of all his blessings. In pronouncing judgment upon the king, Daniel warns, “And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses” (Dan 4:32). After his senses returned to him after that seven-year period, Nebuchadnezzar declares, “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who *walk in pride* He is able to put down” (Dan 4:37).

Although we may not be as arrogant and boastful as Nebuchadnezzar, every one of us has likely engaged in boasting or become puffed up with pride at times. Sometimes we may want others to recognize *our* achievements, praise *our* abilities, or notice *our* sacrifice. At other times, even unconsciously, we find “joy” in comparing *our* possessions with those of others. We may not degrade their possessions, but we boast that “mine has this” or “it can do that.” There is nothing wrong when describing something unless it leads to coveting and envy which draws attention away from the Lord who actually provided it! Therefore, Solomon reminds us, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the

lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Prov 16:18-19). God alone deserves our attention, praise, and worship; we must communicate to others how He has blessed us, how He has gifted and equipped us, and what He has graciously given us! Boast in the Lord alone!

How have you boasted in the past? How did it distract you in your walk with the Lord?

Question
4

John concludes this section by pointing out that attempting to find satisfaction in **the world** is a futile struggle because it and **the lust of it** are **passing away** (v. 17). Just as Jesus has defeated death and "darkness" which are "passing away" because "the true light is already shining," the temporal things of this **world** are also passing away because they only bring momentary "contentment" in the scope of eternity ([1 John 2:8](#)). In fact, worldly things only produce false joy and hope because in the end they disappoint, addict, and leave one feeling empty and wanting more. In contrast, the one **who does the will of God will abide forever!** Worshiping and serving the Lord provide eternal benefits because we know the purpose for which we were created. We don't have to guess or search, but we can productively participate in performing the Lord's will which affords us peace and contentment which we can only find in Him.

How does doing the will of God give us contentment?

Question
5

1 John 2:18-19

REMAIN IN THE TRUTH:

Having urged believers to refuse the influence of the world, John now implores us to remain in the truth, especially because false teachers proclaim an errant message which can deceive and distract. He underscores that **the last hour** has come in which we await the return of Christ where He will gather His followers and restore the universe to sinless

And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

Revelation 13:14

perfection. Consequently, we can recognize **the last hour** because we have been told **the antichrist is coming** and **many antichrists have** in fact already **come** (v. 18). Later, John explains that the **antichrist** is anyone who denies that “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” ([1 John 4:1-3](#)). In this sense, **the antichrist(s)** opposes the things of the Lord and denies the historical truth that Jesus is God in the flesh and only through Him can we have salvation!

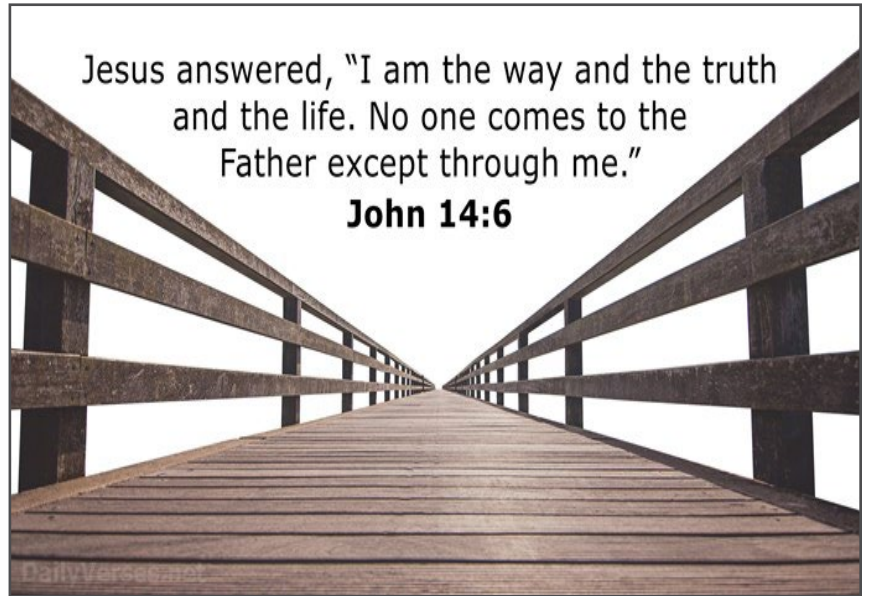
We live in a world fundamentally opposed to the truth which God has plainly revealed in His written Word and confirmed through the coming of Christ. First, the world attempts to re-define who Jesus is and what He came to do. To many, Jesus was nothing more than a great philosopher and teacher who taught a higher ethical standard by which we should live; to them, He was not God in the flesh. For instance, the world attempts to dismiss the divinity of Christ by claiming that His followers and the early church misunderstood His teaching and misidentified Him as God. On the other hand, some also mistakenly believe that Jesus was a passionate, yet misguided, man who challenged the authority of the Roman government and got Himself killed for insurrection. By viewing Jesus in this manner, they reject His miracles, including the resurrection, because they do not fit modern scientific understanding.

How does the world deny the historicity of Christ? How should we respond to this as believers?

Question
6

Throughout Scripture, Jesus clearly understood His identity as God and made it evident to all—even to His opponents. Religious leaders often opposed Him because He made Himself equal with God in what He did and how He spoke! For example, Jesus forgave sins which only God could do ([Luke 5:21](#)), He spoke with greater authority than any teacher or even Old Testament forefather ([Matt 7:28-29](#)), and He explained the true intention of the law which put Him at odds with tradition ([John 5:18](#)). Yet, Jesus also unmistakably identified Himself as God when He asserted, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). Only thirty-years-old in human terms, this declaration not only refers to Jesus’ eternal pre-existence, but also applies the divine name that God gave to Moses at the burning bush to Himself ([Exod 3:14](#)). Jesus, therefore, did view Himself as God and proved it through His resurrection and victory over death and the grave ([Rom 1:1-4](#))!

Second, the rejection of Jesus' divinity downplays His authority, so that people can pick and choose what they want to believe according to their worldly perspective. Consequently, this causes a great misunderstanding of Jesus' teaching. The world has perverted His teaching to justify sin and appease their guilty conscience. Rather than seeing Jesus as hating sin and desiring transformed living through His sacrificial death when we confess and repent, the world misconstrues Jesus' love as tolerance and acceptance. They wrongly believe that He just wants us to be happy and we can do whatever we want as long as it doesn't hurt someone else; therefore, as we saw earlier in this lesson, the world attempts to control its own understanding of morality—right and wrong—based upon individual perspective! Yet, as our Creator, we must follow the boundaries and accept the plan that Christ has given us!



Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

John 14:6

How else does the world wrongly view Jesus' teaching? How should we respond as His followers?

Question
7

The reason the world wants to deny the divinity of Christ is simple: If Jesus is indeed God, then we must follow the way He has outlined for us to have eternal life or we will suffer the consequences of our choice. Since Jesus is God and the One who created us, we must follow His divine plan—not the world's interpretation. We cannot define sin according to our own standards and perspective; we must follow the boundaries which the One who created us has set! Jesus' plan for eternal life requires us to surrender our lives to Him and give up control, so that He can transform us according to His holy character and restore us into a right relationship with Him through confession and repentance ([Isa 59:1-2](#); [1 John 1:9](#)).

The ones who reject Jesus' plan and refuse to believe that we can only have life by surrendering to Him never had a relationship with Him in the first place. Even if they claim to be "Christians," they have not understood the fundamental requirement of belief: a personal relationship with Christ. They continue to rely on their own

Instruct

understanding in direct opposition to the teaching of the Lord; they have never confessed and repented of their sins to have that personal relationship with Christ. Eventually, these people will become frustrated when the truth is preached consistently, so they will **go out from** a scripturally-based church of which **they were** never truly a part (v. 19)!

Conversely, those of us who listen to the Lord and have a personal relationship with Him through His Son who shed His blood to cleanse our sins can never lose our salvation. Nothing will separate us from the love of God; He will help us overcome and persevere to the end no matter what challenges and obstacles we may face in life. On the other hand, the true colors of those who don't have a personal relationship with



Christ will ultimately be revealed in their beliefs, character, and perseverance. If they had true fellowship with the Lord, then John announces that **they would have continued with us**. Notice that he also explains that **they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us**. John communicates this to emphasize that they didn't lose

their salvation; instead, it became clear they didn't have a personal relationship with Christ in the first place. Eventually, no matter how much a person can pretend or even fool themselves their true character will **be made manifest**. If we belong to Christ and have a relationship with Him, we will continue in fellowship with Him and we will draw closer to Him each day so that we might become more like Him. If we don't have a relationship with Christ, then our own worldly desires and attitudes will eventually become visible in our lives through what we say and do no matter how hard we may try to hide them.

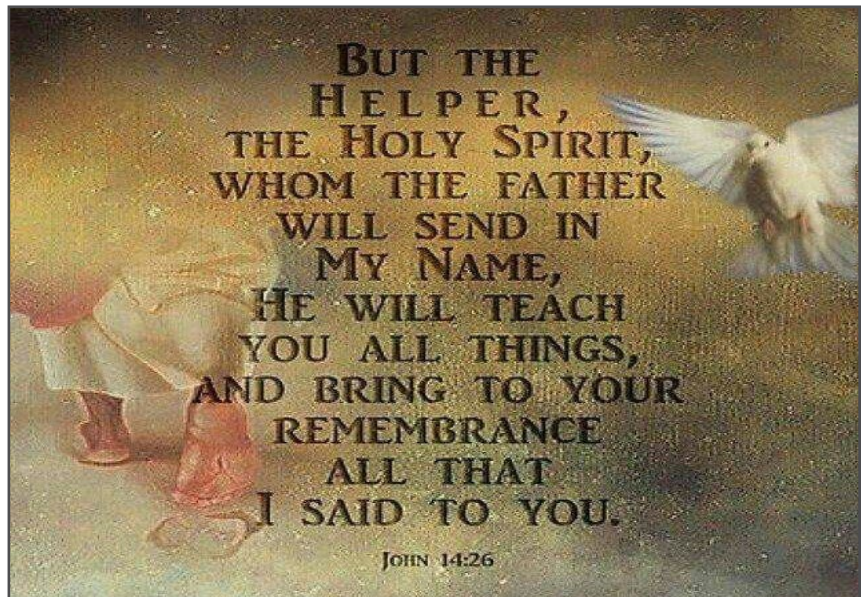
How does Christ help us overcome the obstacles in the world around us and maintain our focus on Him?

Question
8

1 John 2:20

RELY ON THE SPIRIT:

John concludes this section by drawing a distinction between those influenced by the world and those of us who have a relationship with Christ. When we accept Christ as our Savior and repent of our sins, He sends the Holy Spirit to reside in our hearts. John, therefore, notes that we **have an anointing from the Holy One** and can **know all things** (v. 20). We receive the Spirit in full to teach us, remind us, guide us, and preserve us ([John 14:26](#)). Although



John doesn't mention the Holy Spirit by name in this verse, it becomes evident by the language that he incorporates to whom he refers. The word translated **anointing** comes from the same word in which we get the concept of spiritual gift. John isn't talking about "spiritual gifts" here in the sense of empowerment to do the work of the Lord, but rather the way in which we live. As believers, we should live holy lives set apart from the world! The only way that we can live holy lives is through the aid of the Holy Spirit.

When John states that we can **know all things**, he doesn't mean we will have encyclopedic knowledge and understand all the mysteries of the universe. If we did, we'd be God and that desire is what got us in trouble in the first place! Instead, the phrase refers to the fact that we will **know** to whom we must turn and surrender our lives (Christ) and have the ability to distinguish right from wrong in Him! To have right fellowship with the Father, we need to rely upon the Holy Spirit who will lead us in how we ought to live. When we rely upon the Spirit, He will keep us from being distracted by the things of this world and He will help us to focus on the things of Christ. In Romans 8:5, Paul states, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

As believers, we should surrender every area of our lives into the control of the Spirit and rely upon Him fully to direct our paths and transform our character. Problems

will abound when we think we can surrender only a few areas while we retain control of others and push Him out. This will always lead to internal conflict as well as poor choices. When we allow worldly desires to infiltrate even one area of our lives, other areas will slowly become affected over time because we will begin to make decisions based on our circumstances rather than allow the Spirit to guide us. Therefore, as believers, let us refuse the wiles of the world and focus on Christ, so that we might grow and mature in Him. Let us not relate to the world by loving the things of the world, but let us relate our full love and devotion to Christ by cherishing the things that He does and following His will for our lives.

What does a Spirit-controlled life look like?

Question
9

As we learned from the introduction, Herbert R. Sportsman's love for sports began to compete with his devotion to Christ which eventually caused him to become completely sidetracked in his walk. At first, his love for sports seemed harmless because they didn't consume his time and he could continue to worship and serve corporately in the church. Gradually over time, his love for the world even in just this one area replaced his love and devotion for Christ. He no longer valued corporate worship and service as well as he also stopped his personal communication with the Lord because he became too busy and consumed with sports. His lapse in one area impacted his entire life in a gravely negative way; therefore, as believers, we must be careful not to love the things of this world lest they draw us away from Christ to our own detriment.

Seldom do we set out enjoying this activity, pursuing this relationship, or treasuring this possession so that they intentionally supersede our love for Christ. It often happens slowly in such a way that we may not even be fully aware of how far these things have drawn us away from Christ. Therefore, we need to exercise great caution that we don't become distracted by the things of this world; we need to keep things in the proper perspective by always focusing on Christ. If anything has the potential of distracting our relationship with Christ, let us not engage in it. Although it may not inherently be sinful on its own, it becomes sin when Christ no longer has priority in our lives. Therefore, let us examine our lives and make Christ the priority in everything, loving Him with all our being and allowing Him to direct our paths. Life still won't be trouble-free because we live in a fallen world, but Christ will give us the strength to persevere and obediently follow Him—something which we ought to do because of the love which He showed us by dying on the cross for our sins!

Incorporate

How has love for the things of the world crept into the church? How does this affect the work of the church? What can we do as the church to prevent this from happening?

In what ways does the world attempt to obscure the truth? Why is it so important that we view Jesus as God in the flesh? How does this understanding of Jesus affect the way we view things?

How does the Spirit help us recognize and practice the truth?

Journal: Document God's Work

Journal: Document God's Work

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