

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

1 John 1:5–2:6

Each week, read the entire passage before you begin. Record the verses where you find your answers.

Discuss review questions from the previous lesson.

DAY 1: 1 JOHN 1:1-4—THE WORD OF GOD

1. a. Record the scriptural phrases describing
 - 1) Jesus Christ

 - 2) John's personal experience with Him

- b. What is the stated purpose of John's proclamation?

2. Read the Gospel of John 1:1-3. In what way does this passage add to your understanding of 1 John 1:1?

DAY 2: 1 JOHN 1:5-7—WALKING IN DARKNESS OR LIGHT

NOTE: To answer questions in this section, refer also to John 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:35-36.

3. a. Why do some people refuse to come to the light?
 - b. What is the condition in which these people walk, and what is the result?

4. a. How do we walk in the light, and what happens when we do (1 John 2:9-11)?
 - b. Read Ephesians 4:17-32. Which of these exhortations to live as children of light seems most relevant to you? Why?

DAY 3: 1 JOHN 1:8-10—SELF-DECEPTION OR HONEST CONFESSION

5. a. Why is it important to acknowledge our sin?
 - b. What does God's Word say to those who claim "*sinless perfection*"?

6. After careful consideration of 1:9, do you think that God forgives only the sins of which we are aware? Please explain your answer.

DAY 7: WALKING IN THE LIGHT

1 John 1:5–2:6

Jesus Christ is the Word of life, the eternal life! That is how the apostle John begins his book. He reminds his readers that he has seen and heard the truth he proclaims in the person of Jesus Christ. He insists that he has actually touched with his hands the incarnate Word of life. Similarly, the apostle Peter wrote: “*We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty*” (2 Peter 1:16).

LIGHT AND DARKNESS The body of the letter begins with John establishing his own authority: “*This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all*” (1:5). In both the Old and New Testaments, light is intimately related to salvation. The Old Testament describes God as the *light* and *salvation* of men: “*The LORD is my light and my salvation*” (Psalm 27:1; see also Isaiah 49:6). In his Gospel, John declares of Jesus: “*In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.... The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world*” (John 1:4, 9). John also records Jesus' startling statement: “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*” (John 8:12).

THINK ABOUT how light has qualities that are equally true in the physical as well as the spiritual realm. Light illumines and dispels darkness. Light is therapeutic; it stops infection and promotes healthy growth among most living things. Light reveals our surroundings and keeps us from stumbling. When God's light penetrates us, we are spiritually healed as we recognize our sin and ask for salvation through His Son, Jesus. What is your choice: darkness, or the light of God?

The word translated “*walk*” is from the Greek word *peripatomen* and signifies *the total life and conduct*. It is very appropriate for the Christian life, for we are going somewhere—we have a goal. As we journey through life, Jesus is the Way in which we walk, the light by which we walk; the place He went to prepare for us is our ultimate destination (see John 14:5-6). *To walk* implies activity—the Christian life is never static. We do not stand still; we are either moving forward, slipping back, or veering off in the wrong direction. When we live and walk in obedience to Jesus, however, we not only have fellowship with God but with each other, and are continually being cleansed from all sin (1 John 1:7). John calls that *walking in light*, not in *darkness*.

Because we are not yet perfect, we will inevitably sin. To deny that is to deceive ourselves, which is deadly—if we do not admit our need of cleansing and forgiveness, there is no way God can help us. He cannot give what we are not willing to receive, and He will not give what we are not willing to request. We must confess (agree with God) that we have done wrong and ask His forgiveness. He will grant it, and cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness (1:9). His mercy is perfectly balanced by His justice. God is just to forgive us because “*Christ died for our sins*” (1 Corinthians 15:3). His justice demanded a perfect sacrifice before He could forgive us (Hebrews 9:13-14); His mercy found a way to satisfy that demand by accepting the sacrifice of His own Son on our behalf (Romans 3:23-26).

We have seen what darkness meant to the people to whom John wrote. Without light it was easy to lose one's way, or stumble over a rock, or fall into a pit. In the Bible, darkness is used to symbolize a spiritual condition in opposition to God. Darkness represents spiritual blindness, as portrayed by the prophet Isaiah: “*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned*” (Isaiah 9:2). Darkness also represents the domain of Satan: “*I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins*” (Acts 26:17b-18a). Darkness often symbolizes evil: “*Men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil*” (John 3:19b). “*For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened*” (Romans 1:21; see also 1 John 2:9). Scripture uses the term *darkness* to denote unbelieving people who are in spiritual darkness: “*The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it*” (John 1:5; see also 1 John 2:8). The god of the darkness (Satan) blinds the minds of unbelievers so



that they are unable to believe (2 Corinthians 4:4).

ADVOCATE AND EXPIATION John does not deny the reality of the human problem of sin. He writes, “*If any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the expiation for our sins*” (1 John 2:1-2, RSV). Two words stand out here. The first is *advocate*, translated from the Greek word *parakletos*. Jesus used this same word for the Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune God (John 14:16-17), translated *Counselor* in the NIV and RSV, or *Comforter* in the KJV. Now John uses the same word to refer to Jesus, who acts as our lawyer when we sin, pleading our case before the Father in heaven (1 John 2:1). So we have God's own Spirit—the Comforter—within us here on earth, while at the same time we have Jesus Christ—our sympathetic Counselor—representing us before God. He is at God's right hand interceding for us even now (Romans 8:34).

God is not a stern Father ready to condemn sinners except for the intervention of His merciful Son. The Bible consistently portrays the Father as loving and longing to save His erring children (Jeremiah 31:3b; John 5:22-23a; 2 Peter 3:9). What we see in the Bible is the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—united in love and mercy, as well as holiness and justice. Salvation is the work of the Trinity: God the Father planned our salvation; God the Son paid the price, providing the way of salvation; and God the Spirit convicts and convinces us of our need for salvation. Our God is indeed a triune God!

The second word that stands out in 1 John 2:1-2 is *expiation* (RSV) or “*atonement sacrifice*” (NIV). It comes from the Greek word *hilasmos*, meaning *to appease* or *atone for*. In the Old Testament we read of “*the mercy seat*” situated in the Most Holy Place in the Temple (Exodus 26:34). The mercy seat (“*atonement cover*” in the NIV) was the place of expiation (Hebrews 9:5). Some people wonder why God could not just forgive sinners who are sorry. Two misunderstandings cause this attitude. The first is a failure to comprehend the holiness of God. Holiness is not abstract; it is a blazing fire consuming all that is not holy. Second, today's culture has a low view of justice, which is an integral part of God's holiness. *Justice* is defined as *moral righteousness and fairness (treating alike, without partiality or favor)*. Once we understand this, we see that sin *must* be punished.

TESTING THE GENUINE CHRISTIAN LIFE We have already been given two tests: walking in the light and confessing our sins to receive His forgiveness. Now John introduces another test of the Christian life, a means by which we may know that we are “in Christ” and in fellowship with Christ: “*We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commandments. The man who says, ‘I know Him,’ but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys His word, God’s love is truly made complete in him*” (1 John 2:3-5a). John’s conclusion is logical and practical: those who claim to be “in Christ” must “*walk as Jesus walked*” (1 John 2:6). Our spirituality is judged not only by our prayer life and Scripture study and meditation, but by the way those prayers and Bible truths are translated into action in our lives

PERSONALIZE this lesson. How we believe and how we behave are so interrelated that John is able to give objective, observable tests to discern whether our relationship with God is what we think it is. It’s not so easy to deceive ourselves when we are studying Scripture. This week’s study should encourage us in two ways: we do know Him and are walking in the light, and/or we must open up the dark areas in our lives to the light of God. Use 1 John 1:9 to receive cleansing and forgiveness: “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*”

REVIEW: WALKING IN THE LIGHT

11. Share any thoughts from this lesson which personally illuminated your understanding, initiated praise, or motivated some positive action.