



# TESTIFY

A STUDY OF 1 JOHN

MARCH 5 - APRIL 5

H

## HIGHLIGHT: 1 John 1:1-10 NLT

*Below are excerpts from the overall passage for use with the APPLICATION and RESPOND. It will be beneficial for the group to read the whole passage to understand the entire context.*

**1** We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. **2** This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. **3** We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. **4** We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.

**5** This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. **6** So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. **7** But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

**8** If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. **9** But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. **10** If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

## EXPLAIN

*The purpose of this section is to deepen everyone's understanding of the Word.*

John's writings (the Gospel of John, the three letters of John, and the Revelation to John) were inspired during the last two decades of the 1st century A.D. His gospel was to persuade people to believe in Jesus (John 20:30-31). The Revelation was to show people the events that were to come (Revelation 1:1-2). Between the two the three letters of John—specifically 1 John—were written that we might know that we have eternal life through the incarnated Son of God (1 John 1:1-5; 5:11-13).

**vv.1-4** These verses are similar to John 1:1-14, especially vv.1-5. But John is not just copying his gospel because he thought it was a good introduction. False teachers infiltrated the church by the close of the 1st century. The teaching that seemed prevalent at the time of John's writing was Docetism—that Christ only seemed to have a body; that deity could not become flesh and live and die as a man. Christ was a phantom.

John had a pastor's heart. He immediately jumps to the task of caring for the flock entrusted to him. This Jesus Christ—**the one who existed from the beginning**—is not a phantom. We have **heard** him and **seen** him. **We saw him with our own eyes** (this is a more intense "saw" than just before. This was a steadfast gaze to make sure that the first look was not deceptive) **and touched him with our own hands**. John was emphatic—we were not fooled. To make sure there is no misunderstanding, John identifies this personality: **the Word of life, [the] one who is life itself**. And John wants us to experience a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, so that **joy** (excitement) permeates our lives through **fellowship** with each other that comes from **fellowship with the Father and his Son**. The vertical fellowship must be right for the horizontal fellowship to be right.

Jesus, God in the flesh, is the answer to our sin problem (the one who is life itself) and our loneliness problem (fellowship). What John had experienced, he says we can have—because Jesus is for REAL.

**v.5** The One who created the world came to His world with this message: **God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all**. What light accomplishes, God can do for us. Ray Stedman reminds us that: (1) Light enables us to see things that have been there all the time—things that can be destructive. God reveals reality. He opens our mind and our hearts to the truth. (2) Light reveals that which is crooked. A laser beam lets you know if things are in line. God let's us know when things are crooked, out-of-line, exposes the error of my thinking and actions (Romans 12:1-2). (3) Light energizes. Plants don't grow without light. Living in areas where there is prolonged lack of sunshine can cause Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Sunshine energizes, creates warmth that causes seeds to germinate and then grow into flowers, vegetables, fruit, or a nice lawn. God is light and intensifies and promotes our true humanity. It's called the abundant life—rich and satisfying life (John 10:10).

Well, if God is light and this is what he does, what's wrong? Why don't more of us experience rich and satisfying life?

**vv.6-7** We ignore the light—we **go on living in spiritual darkness**. We can be positionally in a right relationship with Christ, but not in fellowship with him (experiencing him). Light exposes things that are in

my life that shouldn't be there—even things that are destructive. But I like them. So what do I do? I ignore the light. I don't read Scripture. I quit going to Life Group because I don't like taking a good long look at myself. I compare myself to others and come out looking pretty good. Or I just put on a mask and pretend everything is okay. When we do that **we are not practicing truth**. Walking in darkness is dangerous to ourselves and to others who have to bump up against us. The answer is to begin **living in the light**—willing to take a good hard look at ourselves, and allow **the blood of Jesus to cleanse us**.

**vv.8-9** Another reason we miss the joyous life that Christ can bring is because we deny sin. In reality we are **only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth**. It's one thing to ignore the light (vv.6-7), it's quite another to believe we have no need for the light because we believe **we have no sin**. I don't need to put the laser to my life to discover anything that is crooked because I have fooled myself into believing there is *nothing that is crooked* about me. The abundant life comes only by getting into the light and seeing all the flaws (they are often small, allowing them to accumulate is disastrous), **confessing our sins to him** who already sees everything, and allowing him to **cleanse us from all wickedness** (see Psalm 32:1-5; 51:1-3, 16-17).

**v.10** And then there is rationalization—what I see is not sin. It may be a weakness; it may be a failure, it may be somebody else's fault, but it is not *sin*. I'm not to blame; it's my circumstances that make me irritable with my family. Or, it's really God's fault because he allowed this to happen; I'm not at fault (see James 1:13-15).

An old nursery rhyme says, "Hark! Hark! the dogs do bark. The beggars are coming to town. Some in rags and some in tags and some in velvet gowns." Dress it up however you like, sin is sin. Let's not **call God a liar by claiming that we have not sinned**. Get in the light and "fully share the joy" (v.4) he died to give us.

## APPLY

*Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question.*

1. What stuck out to you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?
2. In verse 4, John says that he is writing these things so that we may share his joy. How does fellowship with God and with other believers lead to joy?
3. Verse 6 says, "So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth." What does it mean to "go on living in spiritual darkness"?

How does that prove that we are not fellowshiping with God?

4. John also says that if we are living in the light and confess our sins, Jesus' blood cleanses us from all sin and wickedness. How does this encourage you to live in the light?
5. How does being cleansed by Jesus free you from any shame from your past?

## RESPOND

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*Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question. Note: This lesson would be appropriate to break into groups of the same sex for the Respond section, men in groups with men and women in groups with women, as you look at confession.*

1. Is there something you haven't confessed to God? We all sin and need to confess it. In v. 9, we are promised that our sins will be forgiven. If there is something you haven't confessed, find a trusted person(s) in your group and confess it with them. Pray for God's grace to change you so you won't fall in to the same pattern of sin in the future. Ask your pray partner(s) to continue to pray for God's strength to avoid the temptation in the future.
2. Journaling can be an effective tool for fellowshiping with God. Through it we can be honest and real about our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Take time this week to write a prayer to God. Let his light into what you are thinking about, how you are feeling, what you have been doing. If there is sin you need to confess, confess it. If there are questions you have, ask them. If you are worried, stressed, or anxious, let him know and ask for his peace in your life. The important thing is to spend the time with God.