

5 Ways to Cultivate a Life of Honest Transparency

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[0:00] Well, good morning. Greetings from the Elders of Canyon Bible Church of Prescott. Thank you for the privilege of being here with you together this morning. Our elders, our church, we pray for you.

Just so thankful for what the Lord is doing here in your midst and such a blessing to feel like we get to be a part of it, that you get to be a part of what we're doing there. It's precious to see God at work among his people.

I'd invite you to turn with me to the book of 1 John this morning. And as you do, just express my appreciation for you and your pastor. Thank you for caring for Jim and his family.

Such a precious man of God. Such a gift to know him as a friend. And so thankful for the ways that I know you all take serious the responsibility of the body of Christ to care for their pastor, to love him and to care for him and his family.

I know that he's really thankful for you. And I'm really thankful for a man like him who's an example to me of a man who doesn't just get up and preach the Word of God, but who lives it, who shepherds his flock and cares for his people and takes seriously the stewardship that's been entrusted to him from the Lord himself.

[1:11] And so we're in 1 John 1, verses 5 through 9 this morning. Let me read that text and we'll just ask the Lord's blessing on our time in this passage one more time.

1 John 1, verses 5 through 9. We have fellowship with one another.

And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And Lord, we would just come before you one more time this morning and ask that you would be at work among your people here in this place. Use your Word to teach us and to guide us.

I thank you for the saints of Cottonwood Bible Church. Thank you that they're not here to hear from me this morning. They're here to hear from you. And so, Lord, we just want you to speak to us through your Word.

[2:44] And we pray that whatever you have said in this Word, in this verse, would just be clearly expounded as I preach this morning.

And that whatever I have to say this morning would just be a closer explanation of what you have already said. We want to hear from you, God.

And so we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. I don't know if you've thought much about your passwords or your antivirus software, your security questions.

What is your mother's maiden name? Or your two-factor authentication or face ID. It's amazing how we go to great lengths to have this extensive security.

Think about what it must say about the value of something to us that we would develop a technology so that my phone, when I hold it up, scans my face before it will unlock.

[3:54] I mean, that's like living in the future. What is this, 2020? But it shows that there's something there that we really value, isn't there? There's something there that's really important to us because that's not easy to develop as technology.

It's not inexpensive either, but we've gone to great lengths to develop this technology and we pay a pretty penny for it. And we do that because we want to have extensive security on our personal information.

We develop that technology because if some information got out, it could be used against us, couldn't it? Some things, if they got out, could be used to hurt us.

If people were to find out my banking account and my social security number, that's not the kind of thing you post on your Facebook account. If people knew those things, it could be used to harm us. And so we hide them on purpose. And that's a good thing to do with some things. We hide things that we believe could be used to hurt us.

[5:08] Well, spiritually, we can do this too, can't we? We see in ourselves a deep brokenness, a vulnerability when we look into our own hearts.

And if we're honest with ourselves, we're afraid about what would happen if that got out. If everybody knew how broken we really were on the inside.

We're afraid it could be used to hurt us. Afraid to be found out. If the truth were known, some of the things that I think, some of the things that I've said, some of the things that I've done.

We're afraid to allow someone else to get truly close to us. To know what some of those things are that are really happening in our hearts. It's because it gives them the power to hurt us.

We're afraid to be honest about what's really happening in our hearts a lot of the times. Because we, better than anyone else, can see how broken we really are. I mean, there's just no possible way that you could know how broken and sinful my heart really is.

[6:13] Because you're not me. So you don't see it. And the same is true. There's no way for me to truly see how really broken and vulnerable you truly are.

Because I don't see all of the things in your heart that you see. But you see them. And you know.

The letter that we refer to as 1 John was written by the Apostle John for several reasons.

But most of all, John wrote this letter so that people would be able to know if they were truly Christians. And by looking at the fruit of their lives, be able to determine if they had truly been transformed by the gospel.

In the verses that we've just read, he's describing some of those foundational characteristics of a believer. Describing how the life of the faithful is lived fully freed from fear of being found out.

A deep-seated honesty about our brokenness. A life that can be lived out in the open. And ultimately results in deep and satisfying fellowship with God and with other people.

[7:21] And so as we walk through these verses this morning, I think it's helpful just to kind of just take them one verse at a time. And as we do, what you'll see in here is five ways that we can ask the Lord to help us cultivate a life of honesty.

Five ways to cultivate a life of honesty. And the first is this, in verse 5, to know God. Five ways to cultivate a life of honesty. First, know God.

Verse 5 says, This is the message we've heard from Him and proclaim to you that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. That's just a simple summary of the message that John and his friends heard from Jesus.

He says that. This is the message we heard from Him. From who? From Jesus. And this is classic John, too. John does this all the time. You read through John and he'll make a statement and then state its antithesis.

Just to be really clear, he makes a statement and then he states its opposite. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Well, wait, you just kind of said that. You said God is light. There's no darkness in light. He's just going out of his way to be super clear here.

[8:25] God is light. In Him, there is no darkness at all. What does that mean? God is light?

What does that teach us about the Lord? Is God a light bulb? LED or incandescent? The concepts of light and truth expressed in Scripture are corresponding realities.

Light and truth. When light shines, you see truth. And you can even see that even operating within the context of this passage, the connection between light and truth.

When you see, when the light shines, you see the truth. There's no deception. There's nothing hiding in the shadows as it were. And that's good because there's safety in being able to see.

There's safety in knowing that there's nothing that's going to harm me hiding in the shadows. Many of you know and thank you for asking this morning how our house is doing.

[9:27] We bought a hundred-year-old farmhouse and we've been working on renovating it and we finally received permission from the city to move into the house the day before Thanksgiving. And so we celebrated Thanksgiving with peanut butter cups and potato chips because the kitchen wasn't really finished yet.

And it was the best Thanksgiving ever. But we finished about half the house, which was there was enough of the things completed that they allowed us to move in and now we've just been working

on finishing the rest of it.

And one of the things that we did was we only finished one bathroom because that's all you have to legally have to move into your house. And so the other bathroom, the master bathroom, which is larger and just more of a project to finish, we said we'll finish that after we move in.

And so now the master bathroom is, we'll say, almost done. But for a few months, right, there was only one bathroom in our house. And the kids' rooms are over here with the bathroom.

And, you know, the master bedroom is on the other side of the house with no bathroom over there.

And so if you're an adult in the drum home and you wake up in the middle of the night and you need to use the restroom, hypothetically speaking, you would need to leave the master bathroom out into the living room and walk from the living room down across past the fireplace and through the, like, dining room and kitchen area and then down the hallway to where the kids' restroom is, which is, you know, not that big of a deal.

[10:48] Well, it's, you know, first world problems. However, there is something unspeakably dangerous lurking in the shadows of our home at night. Legos.

Strewn about all over the floor. You never know where you'll find these landmines. And it would be so much easier if you could just flip on the light and you could see where you were going and not step on Legos at 2 o'clock in the morning.

But you can't flip on the light because we haven't installed doors on everybody's bedroom yet and so you turn on the light and you're going to wake everybody up. And so, you know, you're walking down the hallway and lo and behold, you are attacked from beneath by the sharpest, most painful object known to mankind.

It would almost be better to have razor blades all over the floor. Why do I share this with you? When in the world does that have to do with this passage? Because if you could just turn on the light, you could see the Legos.

It's really not a big deal, right? But because of the darkness, you don't know where or when you're going to, you better be ready at any moment because you can't see where the danger is.

[11:58] Now, that's a silly example, but we could say the same thing about going out into the woods. You want to go with or without a light in the middle of the night, right? And so, it's just a great vivid picture that John uses here too.

But when the lights are on, sorry, when the lights are off, there's danger. You can't see what's lurking in the shadows. When the lights are on, you can see the danger. Everything's out in the light.

You can see what's going on. There's nothing hidden. When the light shines, you see and you're safe from danger. And John's going to talk about the life of a believer here and a life of transparency and honesty and openness about our brokenness.

But before he does, he's laying a foundation here. And the foundation is God is light. And in him, there's no darkness at all.

It's interesting because he just said in verse 3, right before this, he said, That which we've seen and heard, we proclaim also to you. You can see it right there in verse 3 in your Bible.

[13:01] So that, there's the purpose clause, So that you may have fellowship with us. And indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. The whole reason John is saying this is so that you can have rich fellowship with other believers.

Because to do that, you have to have fellowship with God. The foundational reality to that is knowing God is light. And in him is no darkness at all. John says, This is the message we heard from him.

Well, I don't know if you've thought about this, but that is actually the message that they heard from Jesus. He said in John 8, 12, I am the light of the world. Okay, so you can check your facts on John's speech here.

Fact checker. Yep, Jesus really did say that. I am the light of the world. And if you want to cultivate a life of honesty, of transparency, of humility before the Lord and before other people, the first step in the process is to accurately know and understand the character of God that he is light.

The lights are on, folks. It's like God is light. That's the context here. Nothing is hidden. The lights are already on. That's the context of our fellowship with one another.

[14:12] Our honesty and transparency in addition to that is in the context of the fact that God is light. This is helpful because this is just like Hebrews 4, 13 says, When you know God and you know that he is light, it's like the light shines and he already sees all of your sin.

There's nothing hidden from his sight. And it changes the way you think about how you communicate about your sinfulness. It changes the way that you think about yourself. And so as we think about five ways to cultivate a life of honesty from this passage in 1 John, the first is just to know God. To know that God is light. You saw that in verse 5. In the next verse, you'll see this very simple idea that the second way to cultivate this life of honesty is don't walk in the darkness. Verse 6. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. John is just making a simple point here. If someone says that they have an honest and intimate relationship with God, but their life is characterized by darkness, they're lying. Darkness here, like other places in Scripture, is a metaphor for sin and for dishonesty, for hiding sin and for walking in sin.

[15:48] John 3, 19 talks about it this way. It says the light has come into the world, that is Jesus, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. John 8, 12, when Jesus spoke to them and said, I am the light of the world, the very next thing he said was, whoever follows me will not walk in the darkness.

Darkness is where you hide things you don't want to see. Darkness is a metaphor for your hidden sin, for the sins in your heart, the things that you don't want other people to see, the sin, the dishonesty that's there.

And let's face it, 100% of your sin, you could think about statistics, right? All right, well, let's see, when we go evaluate the police records, what percentage of sin happens at night versus during the day?

You could actually go and do this, go Google it, and you'll find like, hey, 75% of this kind of sin happens at night rather than day, and 69% of this kind of sin happens at night rather than during the day. And so you see, it is categorically true that much more sin happens at night.

The picture here is 100% of your sin happens in the darkness. When you choose to sin, it's like you're turning away from the light. It's like the light of God is shining on your light, and you're turning away to engage in something that you think you're hiding really well from the God who sees everything.

[17:09] And then you're going to try to hide from the people around you, and that's why this darkness is such a great picture. You can't be honest about who you are when you're living in sin.

You can't be honest about who you are, not with God, not with other people, when you're walking in the darkness. So we say we want to live like an honest and transparent life.

Well, the first step to that is if you don't want to hide anything, then don't live in such a way that you have things that need to be hidden. John's talking here about a lifestyle of habitually living in sin when he says walking in the darkness.

That's why he says if we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. According to this verse, in fact, where he says here we lie, the Greek word here is pseudometha, you can hear pseudo in it, which is really familiar to us.

It's a prefix that we put on anything to make it false or anti or to make it a lie. Have you ever seen Carlos Ray on TV? You know Carlos Ray?

[18:25] You're all looking at me like you don't know who I'm talking about. Throwing the roundhouse kicks? Carlos Ray. Oh, that's right. You know him as Chuck Norris is actually his pseudonym. Speaking of, do you know who Marian Morrison was?

Some of you are nodding your heads because, you know, that's John Wayne. If you're a child of the 90s like me, you're familiar, you grew up familiar with James Todd Smith III with his hits like Mama Said Knock You Out and Going Back to Cali.

He went by LL Cool J, which sounds like a much better rapper name than James Todd Smith III. Eugene Orowitz went by the pseudonym Michael Landon.

We don't even realize how many people in the biz go by pseudonyms, right? Shania Twain, Tina Turner, Whoopi Goldberg. None of those people really exist.

They're just made up names. They're just pseudonyms, a fake name. It's a name that you go by, but it's not who you really are. It's a pseudonym. John's point is there's a lot of people in churches today going by the name Christian, but it's just a pseudonym.

[19:40] That's not who they really are. And Jesus said that would be the case in Matthew 7. He said, Many will say to me on that day, the day when people would stand before the Lord, as it were, many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, didn't we do all of these things in your name?

And Jesus will say, and you're familiar with this, Depart from me. I never knew you. That was just a pseudonym that you called yourself a Christian. It was just a fake name.

That's not really who you were. So John's point here, if you want to cultivate a life of honesty, the first step is to be honest with God about the darkness in your heart and the sin in your life.

If the fruit of your life is that you're still living in sin, but claiming to be a Christian, you simply can't live an honest life until you turn from your sin, trust in Jesus Christ to forgive your sin, and because of the work that He did in your place on the cross, He extends to you forgiveness, and that sin is forgiven, and it's dragged out into the light, and it's exposed, and it's done away with.

Then you can begin to live a life that accords with the gospel. So ask yourself. Ask yourself, what areas of my life would I not want people to know about?

[20 : 56] What areas of my life, if I showed up at Cottonwood Bible Church on a Sunday morning and there were pictures of it up on the screen, or there was like a video replay of something that I had thought in my heart, what are those things that would absolutely terrify me to have people know about?

Because it is as though that video plays before the Lord, we stand before Him naked and exposed. We have to give an account to Him for all of those things.

And so, if you're saying that you're a child of light, but in that one dark corner of your life, you're still hiding pet scorpions of sin, nursing them and caring for them, but keeping it secret, just know that repentance before God is the soil in which a life of honesty and integrity grows.

And it's the soil in which joy grows. It's when you have hidden sin in your life that you have to lie about who you are. But it's when it's all naked and exposed before the Lord and forgiven, that you can just be honest about your brokenness and not be afraid of what anyone thinks.

When you know all of your sin is forgiven, it's okay to drag it out into the light before other Christians and get some help putting it to death.

[22 : 25] And that's exactly where John goes next. Right? We've seen five ways to cultivate a life of honesty. First, to know God. Second, don't walk in the darkness. And third, you saw this coming, walk in the light.

You can see that in verse 7. He says, But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. And the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin.

Notice that when you know God, he doesn't just want you to stop walking in the darkness. He also wants it to be a regular practice of your life that you walk in the light. Listen to how Paul describes this in Ephesians 5.

I'll just read it for you. You don't have to turn there. Ephesians 5, 11 through 14. Paul says, Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. Hear the language?

Expose them. For it's shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret, but when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light.

[23 : 29] Therefore, it says, Awake, O sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. And so there's this connection between the light and the truth, between us exposing our sin and dragging it out, and the light of God shining on it and it being forgiven.

And there's a connection between our fellowship with God in that and our fellowship with one another. And that's logical because relationships are built on self-revelation.

Think about this for a second. If God hadn't revealed himself to you, what kind of a relationship would we have with him? If he hadn't first revealed himself to us, what would be the nature of our relationship with him?

We wouldn't be able to know him. We can only know him because he has first revealed himself to us. In the same way, I have to be willing to reveal myself to other people in the body of Christ. Just honestly reveal myself in a way that shows them who I am. And I'm not hiding anything. I'm not hiding sin.

[24 : 42] I'm able to be honest about who I am. And I'm able to be honest about my sin because walking in the light allows me to get their help in putting my sin to death. And our fellowship with one another is so intimately connected with our fellowship with God in these verses.

That's why he says, verse 7, If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. Which is a weird turn of the phrase here. You kind of wonder what John is doing.

He was just saying, if you walk in the darkness, you don't have fellowship with him. And so he says, if you walk in the darkness, you don't have fellowship with him. But if you walk in the light, you have

fellowship with, and you would think he says him.

But he says one another. And it's meant to kind of cause you to tilt your head a little bit like that look your dog gives you. He's just said, right, if we have fellowship, if we walk in the darkness, we don't have fellowship with God.

But if we walk in the light, we have fellowship with one another. And it's just like, it's like these ideas are just woven together. Because even in verse 3, he said, We proclaim also to you that so that you may have fellowship with us.

[25 : 54] So he's talking about fellowship with us, fellowship with God, fellowship with us. And it's all woven back and forth in this context of fellowship with God, fellowship with others, honesty with God, honesty with others, transparency over our sin, confession.

It's all woven together here in the context. So we see these ideas of fellowship with God and fellowship with one another being tied together. As we were driving in this morning to come over here from Prescott, you know, it's like you look out and you see the beautiful scenery.

And I love it when first thing in the morning and the sun's not really up over the mountains or the hills yet. And the mountains and the hills are just kind of this black line across the horizon, you know.

And what's happening there is there's actually all these different layers of mountains and hills and hills and mountains. And they're all kind of rock formations and everything.

They're all layered in front of each other and kind of woven together. But when you look out as the sun is rising, it's just all just one thing. It's just one beautiful image.

[26 : 58] And that's kind of what John is doing here with this idea of fellowship and confession and truth and transparency. He's weaving together layers of fellowship with God and fellowship with one another into this one beautiful idea.

So when you understand who God is, that he's light, and you don't walk in the darkness and you do walk in the light, God's light shines on your life and heart. It affects you and it starts to spill over into your relationships with other believers.

This is really good for us to think about because it's so easy for us to put up walls for other believers, not really experiencing true fellowship with them. Because even though we've been born again, we're still like timid about like, we see that brokenness in our hearts and we are kind of scared of what people would think of us if they found out like, you thought that?

And so we're kind of scared to say that out loud. We're afraid to be discovered. We don't want others to see that. But when we have a deep and intimate fellowship with God, it frees us from the fear of what other people are going to think about that sin because we know the Lord already knows about it and has completely and freely forgiven it as far as the East is from the West.

And so I can be honest about how broken I am because the Lord already knows and I'm right with him. So you think about, think whatever you want about me. So we're freed by the gospel to be honest about our sin.

[28 : 31] We can open up to the people around us about how broken we really are. And we can get some help in the battle against that brokenness because we're not afraid to admit we're kind of a mess. Now, this is tricky because we're talking here about people who walk in the light, not in the darkness.

And so I want to show you all of the ways that I walk in the light. And that's not wrong. I want you to know that I am a believer.

I'm not one of those people who's walking in the darkness. I want you to see I'm walking in the light. And so I'm tempted to only show you the ways that I'm walking in the light and not show you the ways that I'm sometimes struggling to walk in the darkness, the ways that sometimes I see things in my heart, I say things to people or do things that I'm ashamed of.

And so I'm tempted to hide from you the ways that I can be tempted to walk in the darkness so that you'll know I'm a true believer. I really am. But we miss the fact that when we do that, when we only show people the ways we're walking in the light and we hide from them the ways that we're tempted to walk in the darkness, we think it shows that we're walking in the light, but that's actually a form of walking in the darkness.

So look at verse 8. Because we have to ask the question then, what does it look like to walk in the light? Right? If there are ways I'm walking in the darkness, but I'm supposed to tell other people about that and get some help, I'm supposed to confess those things, what does it look like then to walk in the light?

[30:05] Look at verse 8. We'll see the fourth way to cultivate this life of honesty. Don't act like you're perfect. That's a good summary of verse 8. Don't act like you're perfect.

Verse 8 says, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. So, walking in the light does not mean sinlessness.

It can't. Because it says, if we walk in the light, in the verse before this, if we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses our sin. So it must mean that people who walk in the light still have some sin in their lives that needs to be cleansed by the blood of his son, Jesus.

Right? And here he says, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. So we're not people who are walking in the light if we say we have no sin. This is like being in a rehab center when you have an injury, but then acting like you're not hurt because you don't want to look like a wuss.

It's kind of like, you're like, no, I'm good. I'm okay. If you're like, oh man, why are you limping? Limping? I'm not limping. I'm great.

[31:14] I'm doing good. Right? And it's like, uh, no, there's definitely something wrong. I mean, you wouldn't be in here. How can we help? I'm great. I'm good.

I got this. You know, you're in the rehab center because you believe that that's the place you go to get better. And we're here because we believe this is the place that we go to help one another get better.

To do that, we have to admit that we need some help getting better. And that help comes through the gospel and the Lord uses his people in our lives to accomplish that spiritual growth.

You know, in Mark 2, Jesus was hanging out for dinner with a bunch of sinful people. It says, he reclined at the table in his house. Many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples for there were many who followed him.

And the scribes and the Pharisees show up and they're like, why is he eating with sinful people? When Jesus heard that, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

[32:28] I've not come to call the righteous, but sinners. So, we have to recognize that we are a sinful people and be willing to admit that to the Lord and to one another.

Now, I know what you're saying. I know. You're thinking, well, I read this verse, it's almost funny to me because I'd never be the kind of person who would say, I have no sin. Yep, I got saved, you know, 15 years ago and since then, I've just been walking in the light perfectly without sin.

It's been great. The Lord is kind. Right? You're thinking, like, I would never say that. Like, this is a Bible church for crying out loud. We know better than that. None of us would say, I have no sin.

So, what's John talking about here when he says, if we say we have no sin, you know, honestly, we might theologically know, hey, I'm the chief of sinners. I get it. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

We know biblically, but then, we show up for fellowship with other believers or small groups or we're in one another's homes or someone asks how they can pray for us and we can't think of a single thing to tell them.

[33:40] The only prayer requests we can come up are, with or for our house or our finances or our neighbors or our extended family members, right? Like, pray for my aunt's neighbor's leg.

Like, well, how can I pray for you? We think, yeah, pray for my wife. Let me tell you, pray for my wife or pray for my husband.

Like, how can I pray for you? How can we practice sharing the truth with one another? If we're not careful, we can create a culture where it's not safe to admit that we need help in our walk with Christ.

So, exactly what does it mean, then, again, to walk in the light? If it doesn't mean walking in the darkness, but it also doesn't mean not sinning.

Do you sense the tension there in the text? We're looking at five ways to cultivate this life of honesty, to know God, not to walk in the darkness, to walk in the light, not to act like you're perfect.

[34:46] Finally, look at verse nine with me. This is what it looks like to walk in the light. Confess your sin. Confess your sin. Verse nine says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we confess our sins. Please hear that as a condition. If we confess our sins. If we confess our sins.

We have to be the kind of people who confess. We have to be good at confession. Christians should be great at confession.

The confession is a formal statement admitting that one is guilty. This is like, I'm guilty. I did that. I said that.

I thought that. That was wrong and I did it. I knew better and I still said it. I've known better for years and I still had that thought in my heart that I hope nobody ever sees or hears about.

[36:02] Confession is admitting formally, officially that we're guilty. And obviously we're talking about confession of sin to God, obviously. But in the context, the way that he's wrapping fellowship with God and fellowship with one another together confession of sin to one another is obviously a part of what John is talking about here.

Our fellowship with God and with one another are inextricably linked. And honesty with God about our sin creates honesty with one another about our sin.

I mean, it's a great quote I read from an author. He said, the only basis for real fellowship with God and man is to live out in the open with both. I love that.

The only basis for real fellowship with God and man is to live out in the open with both. This has been a part of the church from the beginning. You can go all the way back to the first church, the early church in the book of Acts and see in Acts 19, 18, it says, many of those who were now believers came confessing and divulging their practices.

And a number of those, and I love this picture, a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And so, it's like this picture, these people are getting saved and they've been living in this sin and in particular, for some of them, it was practicing magic arts and they had these like magic books.

[37:33] And so, they're taking like their spell books, as it were, and they're showing up to the bonfire with other Christians and it says they're confessing and divulging their practices.

They're admitting their sin and they're being open and honest about what they've been doing and they're taking the books, this symbol of their sin, and they're throwing it in the fire. And it says, it uses the word together.

I think that's a great picture of the church, isn't it? That's one of the ways that we live as believers with one another. We're the kind of people who confess and divulge our practices and we show up to fellowship with one another, to throw things in the fire and say, I'm done with this.

Help me put this sin to death. James 5.16 says, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another. And so it's not like this, sometimes we can be guilty of talking about our sin, like it's almost like we're bragging, oh, and then I did this.

And then, oh man, you'll never believe and then I did this. Now that was all before Christ, but man, let me tell you how bad I was and then I did this and I did this and it's kind of like, whoa, whoa, slow down there, hang on. This is confessing sins so that other believers can pray for us, so that they can help us in the battle against that sin.

[38:55] That's why Ephesians 5.11 says, take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. It's this picture of dragging it out into the light. So to walk in the light doesn't mean being sinless.

It means admitting and confessing your sin to the Lord and to one another. And when our sins are forgiven, we're just radically freed to be honest about who we are.

The gospel frees us to be incredibly, wonderfully, joyfully honest about all of our imperfections.

We often want deeper relationships. We will even say, I just wish I had some closer relationships in the church, but then we're not willing to confess our sin to one another.

We're to be honest about our brokenness. And so we're still kind of hiding it because we're afraid of what people are going to think about us. And we'll say things like, you know, yeah, I know so and so would probably be a good person for me to cultivate a relationship with.

[40:02] They could probably really help me in my walk with the Lord, but they're just not very transparent with me about their sin. And so I'm just not really feeling like I can be open and honest with them about my brokenness, you know?

And so just, you know, praying the Lord will help me know what to do. Well, none of the passages that talk about confessing our sin to one another say wait for the other person to go first.

We're neighbors with another family from our church. And so we've got three acres and they've got five acres right next to us and there's a fence that runs right down, you know, the middle there.

And when we first moved in, it's like a barbed wire fence. This is like old cattle property. And so when we first moved in, the only way to get to their house from ours was to walk out our front door and down, their house is that way and you gotta go out the front door this way out to the road, down this way and turn at the stop sign and go all the way down the road this way, walk all of my three acres and then some of their five acres to their gate and punch in the coat at their place and then walk up their driveway to get to the house and it's like, oh my goodness.

And they've got a bunch of kids and we've got a bunch of kids and our kids love to play and it's like kind of dangerous to throw kids over the fence. And so we finally thought like, hey, let's have what we call the Saturday gate party.

[41 : 21] And so we just got together. Their family came on this side of the fence and our family came on this side of the fence and we came with poles and bags of concrete and a gate and the latch and we like ceremonially cut the fence, right?

And like, whoo, and the kids shout and jump and then we install the posts in concrete and we put in a gate. So now you can just freely walk back and forth from their property to ours and the kids do this all the time and this is great.

Well, one day I went out there and one of my kids was standing on our side of the gate. One of their kids was standing on the other side of the gate and there's kind of a standoff.

Like, both of them want to go through the gate and neither of them are going to move out of the way of the other one. And I kind of walk up and I'm like, hey, what's going on? My child says to me, he won't move out of the way.

You know, like, you move out of the way so I can open the gate this way. To which I said, the gate opens both ways. Like, all you gotta do is just step back, open the gate.

[42 : 29] And I think so often that's exactly how we are as believers with one another. It's like we're waiting for the other person to open the gate. And I would just say, the gate opens both ways, friends.

Don't wait for them to confess their sin to you. You go to them, confess your sin to other believers and hear me, don't do this because, hey, people who confess their sin to one another, they have closer relationships and you want closer relationships, right?

That's not a good motivation for this. We confess and divulge our practices because that's what Christians do. We confess and pray for one another because God has forgiven our sins through the gospel of his son.

Not just because we want closer relationships. It just so happens that closer relationships is one of the byproducts of obedience in this case. When we live that way with God and with others, look at the result in verse 9.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. What an amazing verse.

[43 : 44] I mean, I know all scripture is inspired by God. I know. But you'd be a fool not to admit that sometimes you just come across a verse, you're just like, pfft, that's a real precious cherry on the tree, isn't it?

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And of course, we know he can do that because of what Christ did in our place, right?

He's not just glossing over our sin. He's not just sweeping it under the rug. The punishment for our sin isn't just going out the window and he's like, ah, it doesn't matter. No. His son took the penalty for our sins in our place on the cross so that when he died, it is as though he took our sin to the grave.

It is as though we who have put our faith in him died with him. And when he rose again on the third day, it is as though we rose with him to a new life.

And that new life is a life that is characterized in these ways. We know God. We don't walk in the darkness.

[45 : 02] We walk in the light. We don't act like we're perfect. We know better than that. So we confess our sins to one another. Spiritually, I think we're all hiding to some degree.

We do see in ourselves that deep brokenness and vulnerability and we're afraid to be hurt, afraid to be found out, afraid that other people won't think we're as mature of a Christian that we hoped they would think of us.

So, while it's good for us to hide things like passwords and bank accounts because we know that they could be used to hurt us if people got a hold of that, when we've turned from our sin and turned to Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls and the forgiveness of our sins and the Lord has taken that sin and cast it as far as the east is from the west, the Lord has ultimately protected us from the danger that our sin poses to us.

And so, we're freed to not be afraid of what would happen if that information gets out. So, passwords, two-factor authentication, bank accounts, keep that safe and protected.

That can be used to hurt you. But when you're truly born again by the Spirit of God from above, you know my sin can't ultimately be used against me anymore and I don't have to keep it hidden.

[46:35] We don't have to hide our sin so we're freed to be truly honest, honest before the Lord, honest with our brothers and sisters in Christ and then we fight this battle together. Father, that's our heart and that's our prayer.

It's why we're here this morning. God, we had a time of confession this morning where we come before you confessing. God, we admit that there is so much broken still in our hearts that we're ashamed of.

Thank you, Father, that you've forgiven our sins. Lord, help us to walk in the truth of the gospel, to live as children of the light, to not be afraid to expose our sin to you, Lord, and to our brothers and sisters in Christ so that our sin would be forgiven and so that we would have help in the battle.

Lord, what a great message we've heard that you are light and there's no darkness in you at all.

God, would you help us?

There are still ways that we're tempted to walk in the darkness and that's not who we are anymore as believers. We don't want to live that way, God. Help us to walk in the light as you are in the light.

[47:53] We want fellowship with you. We want fellowship with one another. God, we rejoice that the blood of Jesus, your Son, has cleansed us from all sin so that we stand before you holy and blameless with great joy.

Lord, I thank you for the saints of Cottonwood Bible Church. Thank you for their precious testimony. Thank you for the mighty work that you've done in their hearts and lives.

Thank you for the warm reception that they give when we come to visit. Thank you for their attentiveness to your word. Lord, I pray for them that you would make them a people who walk in the light as you are in the light.

Let there be such a deep and rich and abiding fellowship with you for each of them that it creates among them a deep and rich abiding fellowship with one another.

Lord, let this be a place where as they come together, they're able to confess their sin and divulge their practices and throw them in the bonfire as it were and get help from one another with their sin.

[49:13] And Lord, all of this shows the world around us we're different because you've made us different because you are great and greatly to be praised and so as your gospel advances here in Cottonwood and in the Verde Valley, Lord, let the light be seen.

Let the gospel go forth. Let the name of Jesus Christ be exalted. We pray in his name. Amen.

Amen. All right.

This is a time that we, as you know, we usually just take a moment to let the sink in, right? to let the thank you, thank you.

You mother,