

# 1 John 1:5–10

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Let's pray. Lord, we echo what we just sang, that you will shine your light into our hearts, and you will reveal yourself to us today through your word.

Help us to walk accordingly, in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, last week I wasn't here because I had the pleasure of kicking it with a few of our students down at Dixon Valley Camp for our Winter Retreat 2017, where the theme was, Identity, Not Your Own.

You are not your own. You were bought with the price. Therefore, glorify God with your body. And I had fun. I think they had fun, too.

If you see somebody wearing a blue and yellow hoodie, you know, stop them and ask them, what happened at Winter Retreat and what did you learn?

We are ducktailing that identity piece into understanding of authenticity as Christians, as we are in youth group now, jumping into 1 Timothy, looking at our charge of our faith and how real Christians are to act in light of what they understand.

[ 1 : 35 ] Our text today has the same flavor in there. It sets the question of authenticity before us. What is real?

What is real fellowship? What does that look like? What is the real nature of our sin? What is a real Christian? What's real?

If you've had the pleasure of, as I have, of being in certain neighborhoods or hanging out with members of the urban persuasion, you probably run across a phrase in these communities, real, recognize, real.

Real, recognize, real. That's what I titled the sermon for today. And it's grammatically incorrect so that you can ask the question, well, what is real?

It's used to say that since I'm real, since I'm about my business and I know who I am, it's easy for me to authenticate or to tell if someone else is being real or if they're being fake.

[ 2 : 46 ] Real, recognize, real. And as we look at how we gain assurance for our walk with Christ, our text today implores us to ask, how do I know I'm real?

Because I got some news for you. God is real and he recognizes who is real. The text asks the question, but begins where God always begins when he's dealing with his people in the text.

He begins with the identification of who he is in verse 5. The essence of who God is. So we don't just start with what you should do.

We start with, well, who is God and why does he matter? We check the source of who is giving the instructions. So real, recognize, real, right?

Verse 5, a received message. God is light. He says, this is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you that God is light.

[ 3 : 55 ] This God being light is pivotal piece of knowing, foreknowing and understanding that God has manifested himself to man through his son.

God is the revealing person. He is the one that has manifested what is true about himself to mankind.

If we are to use contemporary figures, we aren't new to the understanding of this light versus what he says next, in him is no darkness at all.

This isn't new to us. If you have watched any westerns, typically the hero is dressed in white and the villain is dressed in black, right?

If you listen to the score of films or television shows, you'll start to hear some upbeat music for the protagonist and some kind of dark music for the antagonist, right?

[ 5 : 00 ] There's this appeal to light and darkness even in just the world we live in that we don't have to search for to find.

So the Apostle Paul makes this distinction as well when dealing with this light and dark motif in Ephesians chapter 4. He says, Now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.

And this is where he says, They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart.

Here the darkened understanding keeps us from walking in a way that pleases God. Real recognizes real. Well, there's this received message that if it's not received, you can't understand the God who is being portrayed.

The word light is meant to distinguish God Almighty from others. He's a distinguished figure. God is light. God is truth.

[ 6 : 12 ] Now where do I get that from? Look down at verse 6. He says, If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice truth.

The author there seems to make a comparison to the truth and the light. It would seem that it would say that the message we have heard and we proclaim that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not walk in the light. But that's not what it says. It says we do not practice truth. The people are meant to see that truth is not, that truth is not only associated with light, but truth is the light.

That God is truth. Do you know anything about logic? A equals B, then B equals C, then A equals C, at least in this context.

Well, God is truth because God is light. And the light is the truth that we must practice. In other words, nothing is truly understood outside of the light, outside of God.

[ 7 : 31 ] Another way that you can see this light kind of portrayed is that God is pure, separated. He has no frailties, no faultiness in his nature, in his essence.

There's nothing stained about God. God is perfect. God is light. He's also the revealer, the unveiler. God brings the truth and then brings the understanding of that truth. In other texts, John 4, it says God is spirit.

He says in Hebrews, God is an all-consuming fire. Later we'll see in 1 John chapter 4, God is love. Ladies and gentlemen, we're dealing with an awesome God.

Psalms says God wraps himself in light. And as the song says, what? Darkness tries to hide, but trembles at his voice. Paul in 1 Timothy 6 says he dwells in what?

[ 8 : 35 ] Inapproachable, unapproachable light. The statement about God's essential character is the governing principle, the governing principle in everything that has to do with our fellowship with him.

You have to understand who he is in order to fellowship with him correctly. God is light. It establishes our understanding in him.

It sets the basis for how sinful people have fellowship with the God. How we deal with our sin is based on our understanding of this light. If you don't understand that God is perfect and God does not dwell with sin, then you're liable to do anything.

We would have to embrace the gospel provision of how to deal with our sin rightly if you understand that God is light. We must embrace his commands even.

Fellowship with God begins with the character of God and what God is concerned with, not primarily with what we are concerned with and what we want. In him is no darkness at all as the text continues.

[ 9 : 45 ] A statement that is meant to emphasize what God is what God is by pointing out what he is not. I love when he does that. Let me show you what he is by telling you the opposite of what he's not.

The opposite of what he is so that you can get a glimpse of who he is. He stands in sharp contrast to darkness. That he has no darkness shows us the difference even between God and man.

So it's not just a philosophical understanding of God as light. It's this real tangible that he's different from you. We can't even fathom just things without darkness.

Situations without some sort of frailty. I mean, if you're shopping for a house as we just got finished doing, my wife and I, and you get, you get the one that you think is good and, and apparently you see the price and it's like, oh snap, that's way below our budget.

What's the first question you ask? What's wrong with it? You see, we have the understanding that I can't, if it's coming down, it's got to be something wrong.

[11:04] Well, God doesn't do that. God stays in his place and he's separate from darkness. He's separate from man. Even John is writing in the Gospels about John the Baptist, the difference between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.

The light shines in darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him, Jesus Christ.

Now, and I love this, for he was not the light but came to bear witness of the light. What would our lives be like if we had that mentality? I'm not the light. I'm just coming to bear witness to the light. This is the message that the next verses lay out these conditions for what it means to receive that message.

Real recognizes real. So you have a received message but in verse 6 through 7 you get this real walk. Say real walk.

[12:08] You get a real walk. The first conditional phrase in verse 6, look at verse 6, he says again, if we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness we what?

Lie and do not practice the truth. This depicts what this audience most likely was dealing with. A people who made claims to a relationship with God but in reality walked in opposition to him. The claim of having fellowship with the Father and the Son while walking in darkness according to the text makes us what? A liar. Which means you're not practicing the truth.

We're not doing the truth as other translations say it. It's the depiction of one actively walking in darkness.

Now I say that because when you talk to individuals about certain habits of sin you typically get oh that was an accident but the text seems to say that no you don't just accidentally start walking in darkness.

[13:19] There's a lifestyle of darkness there's a habitual sin that needs to be dealt with and it's deeper than what you know. We're not looking at the state of a few wayward individuals in 1 John.

No. What's being described here is any and everybody who lives opposite of God.

Not walking in the light. Going back to even the gospel of John he says in chapter 3 verse 18 whoever believes in him is not condemned.

Praise God. But whoever does not believe is condemned already. Oh man. Because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God and he says and this is the judgment you ready?

That light has come into the world and people love darkness rather than light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed as that unveiling.

[14:28] But whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God. The reality is one cannot have real fellowship with the light while they walk in darkness.

You have to have a real walk. Living in darkness according to John chapter 3 means that you have hatred towards the light. It's not just a oh snap I forgot a momentary lapse of reason.

There's hatred. There's deep heart issues that need to be dealt with. How does one get to a place where they will claim fellowship with God and choose to walk in darkness?

Verse 7 gives us the contrast of verse 6. Look at it. 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.

Those who walk in the light have real fellowship with those in the light and with the only son who is able to cleanse sins. Now the way in which folks will walk in darkness while claiming to have the light is that they'll have to change the lens in which they see Christ.

[15:55] They have to change the message that was supposedly received. Whoever verse John chapter 3 verse 21 whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen his works have been carried out by God.

This is the reason why Paul says in 2nd Corinthians do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers for what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness or what fellowship has what light with darkness.

Real walk is seen in genuine fellowship that promotes the real God. Your real walk will be seen in a genuine fellowship that promotes a real God.

But next we get a real talk. You get a message that's received a real walk and in verse 8 through 9 a real talk. Everybody say real talk.

It just got real. As many were claiming to not be guilty of committing sin they most likely were also claiming to be Christians at the same time.

[17:03] Look at verse 8. If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. There were many saying that I don't have any sin.

I have no sin. This would be the reason would be for this conditional statement was because John is dealing with the same individuals who are seeking to redefine the reality of who God is.

Maybe trivializing their sin and bringing God down just a little bit dimming his light a little bit more.

You see in verse 8 he says that you deceive yourselves.

There's a deception of sin. It's detrimental and as the phrasing says there's a continuance of sin.

It continues. It doesn't just stop. It's like a downhill slide. This type of person I dare to say is in grave danger.

[18:07] They're deceived. According to verse 9 they also lack the truth within them. So in verse 7 they do not practice the truth.

In verse 9 they don't have the truth budding within them. While we saw that a person with the lifestyle of living in darkness cannot practice truth, the person who is in denial of his own sin lacks the truth that rests in them.

The danger is that 1 John reveals that when a person possesses the wrong attitude towards sin and are dealing with someone who is not we are really dealing with someone who is not a Christian while claiming to have a real walk with God while you actually walk in darkness this makes you a liar to the world but claiming you have no sin means you are lying to yourself.

you might be able to fool the world but how do you deal with your own guilt? How do you deal with your own shame?

How do you deal with your own sin? What does a real talk look like for those who have fellowship with God and light? Verse 9 puts forth that real talk confesses sin.

[19:31] Look at verse 9 if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The authentic real Christian adopts a lifestyle of confession of sin. This is not a one time deal.

This is an ongoing lifestyle practice of confessing sin. What does confession of sin look like? I thought I'd take a side note here because speaking for myself I find it easier to confess sin to God privately when no one can hear.

I'm not saying that that's wrong because when given the opportunity during our congregational prayer you should do it. You should meet with your maker. Especially in light of what you're learning in the text.

But I find it on a tangible level easier for me to get by and not have to deal with others' opinions about what I did, what I said, how I think, how I believe.

[20:46] Or maybe let me take it a step deeper. Maybe it's easier for us in community groups, which I hope you all are in community groups, maybe it's easier for us to confess us sin in a general context, that maybe even the wording kind of takes the load off you a little bit where you say stuff like I'm struggling with versus I was bogus.

I would put forth to you that they're all needed. You need community. Maybe some things that are done don't need to be put out for everyone.

But I would say that if you've sinned, the brevity of where you've sinned and who you've sinned against needs to be handled, and maybe you need to do the hard thing and confess to someone about what you've done.

Because I fear that even I can be lax in confessing direct sin to somebody. Well, public confession can be made, group confession, private confession, personal confession, but the biggest reason for our confession, the biggest incentive for our confession is the grace of God. He is faithful according to verse 9 and just to forgive. While David had it correct in Psalm 51, he says, against you and you alone have I sinned.

[22:15] He's not promoting that you don't go to anybody about it. David is bringing to light that the same truth 1 John is bringing that God is the only one who can forgive those sins and cleanse us thoroughly from all unrighteousness.

Only the God who is light can purify us from sin and bring us into right relationship and into the light completely. Confessing our sins rather than denying our sins is an ongoing action that can only be completely handled through Christ.

The message we received is revealed in a real walk, in a real talk, and lastly, especially in light of our sin, it's dependent on us believing in a real Savior.

Do you have the message? Do you have the walk? Do you have the talk? We'll continue to get to know the real Savior. He's our solution. The writer here turns to the answer in our final conditional phrase by continuing the same thought about confession.

The purpose of our confession is not meant to give way to more sin, just because God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, but to be cleansed thoroughly and completely so that you can walk guiltless and shamelessly.

[ 23 : 46 ] The writer is dealing with the people who are claiming to be Christians, and since claiming Christ, they are claiming to be without sin. The difference here is that not only are they deceived and the truth is not in them in verse 8, but we are told we make God out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

Look at verse 10. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. And almost it's like he's bringing it down. Let me get a little deeper here.

You're calling God a liar. Like if we can't agree that that's wrong, maybe we need to have a different conversation, right? Why a liar?

Because mankind's human condition is innately sinful. God offers Christ as the remedy for our sin. Real quickly, look over at chapter 5, verse 10. He says, whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself.

[ 24 : 54 ] Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.

You and your relationship to God affects your relationship with sin. It affects your understanding of sin, but it also affects what you're preaching about God.

Are you making him out to be a liar? Because you're skipping the fact that the Son handles your sin only. Christians not only need Christ to be forgiven, they need Christ to be cleansed daily.

To say we have not sinned while we are in this mortal frame is to say we do not need Christ every day and that what God has said concerning his Son is not true.

Perhaps our text yet again points us back to the Scripture in Christ has manifested. He is the manifested word made flesh. Why does he mention the word is not in us?

[ 26 : 03 ] Because Christ is the word made flesh. He says if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

True confession brings you into contact with the real Savior. It corrects your real walk, gives you a real talk because real recognizes real.

We are brought into fellowship with God by Christ who is our advocate according to verse 1b of chapter 2. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ, the righteous.

the atoning sacrifice is seen in verse 2. He is the propitiation, he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

So you hear, you get the picture that he's your advocate, he's the one that steps up to the plate for you, he speaks for you, he's got your back, your front, your back, your side to side, but then he's also that atoning sacrifice for you with the Father.

[ 27 : 29 ] He is the one that removes the stain of sin, the shame, he has satisfied God's wrath with his own blood and the text says that with his blood he has cleansed you at the same time.

Psalms 129 verse 4, the Lord is righteous, he has cut the cords of the wicked, praise God, but he also changes our posture. So it's not just what Jesus did on your behalf, but he changes our posture towards sin in the process in the effort to correct our attitude and understanding of God as a result.

This is the reason that a Christian who receives the message that God is light does not continue to walk in darkness, but they have a real walk in the light as he is in the light according to verse 8 of verse 9.

Why they can, this is the reason why they continue to confess sin, bringing sin into the light? Because what fellowship does darkness have with light?

Well, the answer is none. Or this is the reason why they recognize that they are not void of committing any other sins, but they run to a real savior constantly who is able to properly bring them back into fellowship with the God who is light.

[ 28 : 47 ] Do you know the God of light? Do you know the Savior who brings the truth to us so that we can have proper understanding and proper living in our assurance and our walk of faith?

Well, the way in which we, the way in which the real will recognize real when it's all said and done, let me encourage you real quick, is that they receive the message, this truth about God.

God is light and in him is no darkness at all. And they demonstrate that they have received that message by receiving and demonstrating a real walk, a real talk, and that they know, the real Savior.

Let us pray. God, thank you that you are light. Thank you again that our fellowship can be pure with you, that it can be made right with you, that what your son has done for us on the cross.

We can run back to him as the only advocate, the only atoner for our sins, and the only one that can handle all that is wrong within us.

[ 30 : 23 ] Lord, I pray again that this week we can be real and that you will recognize us as real. In Jesus' name, amen.

God