

**TITLE Intro: Does it matter what you believe? Or, Just focus on Jesus!**

- Last year, I heard a pastor present three ideas: 1) exclusivism, 2) inclusivism, and 3) universalism as different approaches to Salvation.
- He stated, “Good Muslims will go to heaven.” The point being... if you want TRUTH – no matter which path you take – all paths lead to JESUS. IS THIS TRUE?
- **For example:** Muslims believe in Jesus. They think he was a prophet. They believe Muhammad is greater than Jesus. They reject the idea of Jesus being God. Being God’s Son. AND, they reject that He died on the Cross, stating God would never allow his prophet to die in such a way.
- THIS IS IN DIRECT CONTRADICTION TO THE CLEAR TEACHINGS ABOUT JESUS IN SCRIPTURE.
- **The path of Islam may lead you to Jesus. But it is not the Jesus who saves.**

**Did you know every book, except Philemon, in the New Testament warns against false teachers/teachings?**

- When we look at “what does the Bible say about belief,” we find that Scripture makes a big deal of what we believe. Thus, what we believe matters.

**This may be unsettling for some of you!** Young and old. Questions begin to swirl in your head, “Am I believing the right things?” “Isn’t it just as simple as believing in Jesus?” “Wait. But if Muslims believe in Jesus... then...”

**John 8:31–32 (ESV)** <sup>31</sup> So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

**DEMONSTRATION:** (Turn lights off.) Hold up the light of your phone! A small light can be seen in a room full of darkness – this is the BEAUTY of the Gospel!

**TODAY’S SERMON: Walking in the Light – 1 John**

**A. Historical Background for 1 John**

- **Author:** 1 John is anonymous! Surprise! The Church in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century affirmed it was an Epistle of John, and most scholars agree and demonstrate the similarities between the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel and this Epistle.
- **Date:** 1 John was most likely written between 80 and 90 AD. Between the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel and the Revelation of Jesus.
- **Location:** John is most likely writing this from Ephesus, where he had planted churches.

**Historical Context, original audience, reason for writing:**

- This is a pastoral letter that was written and sent to many churches.
- John’s heart was to address FALSE TEACHINGS that had crept into the Church!
- Some believers had fallen away from the faith, and others were discouraged and left doubting their faith. John’s pastoral heart shines through, and he is seeking to CORRECT the false teachings and bring the Church back into alignment with the truth of the Gospel.

**False teachings that had crept in:**

1. **Theological** – Denying Jesus’ divinity, denying the Incarnation (Jesus came in flesh)
2. **Moral** – antinomianism was spreading! As Christians, we no longer have to obey the laws of God.

- Quote: Steve Furtick used a bad sermon analogy, saying, “God broke the Law for love.”
- I doubt Furtick was meaning to say that all sin is ok for believers – but statements such as this pave the way for this type of thinking.

3. **Behavioural** – they were saying they followed Jesus, but their lives didn’t produce fruit.

1 John has a message for us, too! In defending the Gospel, ensuring we stay grounded in TRUTH, refuting the false teachings of our day, and DEFINING for us what it means to **LIVE IN THE LIGHT**

**QUESTION TO ASK:** Am I living in the light? Am I leading others to Live in the Light?

**1 John 1:1–10 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— <sup>2</sup> the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— <sup>3</sup> that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. <sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

**B. Preface: 1 John 1:1-4 Jesus is God. Jesus is eternal. Jesus came in the flesh.**

<sup>1</sup> *That which was from the beginning,*

- **Genesis 1:1 (ESV)** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
- **John 1:1, 14 (ESV)** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- John begins by refuting the idea that Jesus was just a man.

*V. 1b-2 which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— <sup>2</sup> the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—*

- Heard, seen, and touched – Jesus was FLESH – He is eternal, He is God, He came in the FLESH –
- And – John claims, “WE HAVE SEEN HIM”. John reminds them he was an eyewitness.
- The life was made manifest – all the OT promises of a Messiah – the FULLNESS OF GOD- was manifested in the INCARNATION – Jesus (GOD), took on flesh, and became like ONE OF US.

*V. 3-4 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.*

- **What you believe matters.** The truth of Jesus and the Gospel are 100% necessary for FELLOWSHIP with God and with the Body of Christ.
- For example: when you believe you are worthless and unlovable – you can be in a room full of people who LOVE YOU and still feel alone! SEE? Fellowship with others can depend on BELIEFS.

- **John says the TRUTH of the GOSPEL** – putting your faith in Jesus as God’s Son, who came in the flesh, died for sins, was raised back to life, ascended to heaven and is coming back again – GOSPEL – is KEY to having Fellowship with God AND Fellowship within the Church.
- **The GOSPEL message is JOY! We have been forgiven our sins and reconciled to God!**
  - How many CHRISTIANS live joyless lives? Struggling to get through each day. I know there are a variety of reasons for this!
- **Do you believe God wants to fellowship with you?**
- **Do you believe Jesus died for your sins?**
- **Do you believe Jesus is who He says He is?**
- **Do you trust in God’s plan for your life?**

Now, that is an intro. Already in his letter, John is refuting some of the false teachings that were creeping into the church. He reminded people of the TRUTH. Jesus is God. Jesus is eternal. Jesus came in the flesh – he was fully God. Fully human.

What you believe about Jesus matters. Everything depends on it.

#### **C. 1 John 1:5-7: God is LIGHT. Fellowship with God = Walking in the Light (vice versa)**

<sup>5</sup> *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

- Vs 5. Identifies a key theme. GOD IS LIGHT.
- **John 1:9–12 (ESV)** *The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*
- **John 8:12 (ESV)** *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*
- **God is Light** – meaning **He is the source of everything good, truth, holiness, and righteousness.**
- **The message is CLEAR. God is LIGHT. Fellowship with Him means WALKING IN THE LIGHT.**
- **CAVEAT:** He is not saying you need to EARN salvation – He is clear to all who BELIEVE in His Name – ONCE YOU BELIEVE IN HIS NAME – He is defining WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW HIM.

<sup>6</sup> *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.* <sup>7</sup> *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.*

- **FELLOWSHIP with God is IMPOSSIBLE if we are walking in darkness!** John is now refuting antinomianism! The idea that you can live however you please and be a follower of Jesus – John says, “NO CHANCE”.
- **WESTERN CHURCH:** Living for the world, compromised sexual ethic, rebellious towards parents and authority, greed, etc., have ALL crept into the Church and are seen as “ACCEPTABLE”.
- **If you walk in darkness while claiming to fellowship with God – you are a liar.**
- **BUT** – if we WALK IN THE LIGHT – we have fellowship with GOD – Fellowship with each other! AND Jesus’ Blood cleanses our sin!
- **While refuting heresy and false teaching** - John also gives the secret to combating LONELINESS! DESPAIR! And ANXIETY! And HOPELESSNESS!

- **WALK IN THE LIGHT** – and you WILL have – fellowship with God and fellowship with other people!
- **“writing that our joy may be complete,” little wonder John thought this message brought JOY!**

#### **D. 1 John 1:8-10 How to: “Walk in the Light”**

<sup>8</sup> *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* <sup>9</sup> *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* <sup>10</sup> *If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

#### **False Claims RE: Living in the Light:**

- **You can have fellowship with God while living in darkness (Sin)**
  - IF you truly have fellowship with God, through Jesus, you will be cleansed from sin (penalty), AND you will no longer continue in sin (practice).
- **After being saved, you no longer sin**
  - In John’s day, people were claiming, “once you receive Jesus’ gift of salvation,” you are no longer a sinner. It doesn’t matter how you live.
  - Today’s culture and some within the church preach the same message. You are GOOD THE WAY YOU ARE. You don’t need to change. And even changing the definition of SIN so as to remove the guilt.
  - Saying we have “no sin” makes us a liar. Meaning. We are not walking in the light.
- **You have not sinned**
  - This is rejection of your need for the ATONING WORK OF THE CROSS.
  - John says in this instance, the falsehood is so severe, we make GOD TO BE A LIAR and His Word is not in us. TERRIFYING.
  - Denying the need for SAVING. We are as good as we are. MAKES GOD A LIAR.

#### **TRUTH RE: Living in the Light:**

- Walking in the light (Living in conformity to God’s will) = Fellowship with God & others, and cleanses us. (v. 7)
  1. PRACTICES – more later in series
- Confession of sin brings forgiveness, removes guilt, and restores fellowship!
  1. Contrary to what we often think – sharing our weaknesses and failures with others leads to RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS – the best ones you can find!
- All have sinned and need God’s forgiveness. (Rom 3:23)
  1. Jesus calls us to “COME AS WE ARE. BUT HE DOESN’T LEAVE US AS WE WERE!”

HOLDING ONTO SIN – Keeping sin – our weaknesses – shame – anxiety – discouragement – sickness – struggles – HOLDING ONTO THESE THINGS LEAVES US IN THE DARK. LEAVES US SICK. LEAVES US ALONE.

#### **ARE YOU LIVING IN THE LIGHT? Or, WALKING STILL IN DARKNESS?**