

How Can I Know?

Lesson 2: Walking in the Light vs. Walking in Darkness -- 1 John 1:5-10

Think about what light does to a room. A space that felt fine in the dark, lived in, ordinary, comfortable, suddenly looks different when the sun pours through the window. The dust on the shelf, the smudge on the glass, the corner that never quite gets cleaned: none of it changed, but now you can see it. Light does not create the mess. Light reveals it. And here is the strange thing about us as human beings. We often prefer the dim room, not because it is cleaner, but because in the half dark we do not have to look at what is really there.

John has just told us that he writes so we may have fellowship, and that our joy may be full. Now he tells us the very first thing he ever heard from Jesus, the message at the foundation of everything else: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). There is no shadow in God, no hidden compromise, nothing false. And that single fact sets the terms for everything that follows. If we want fellowship with a God who is pure light, we cannot keep living in the dark and pretending it does not matter.

But here is where so many believers misunderstand John, and the misunderstanding steals their assurance. They assume that walking in the light means walking flawlessly, never stumbling, never sinning. And since they know their own hearts, they conclude they must not be in the light at all. John means something far more freeing. To walk in the light is not to be sinless. It is to live honestly before God, to stop hiding, to let His light fall on our actual lives instead of on a polished image. And he promises that for those who walk in that honest light, the blood of Jesus is cleansing them, continually, even now.

So this lesson presses two questions into the heart at once. First, are you living in the light or in the dark, honestly before God or carefully managing an image? And second, when the light reveals what is there, do you run from God in shame or run to Him in confession? John wants to coax us out of hiding. He wants us to discover that the very light which exposes us is the light in which we are washed clean. Read these few verses slowly, and let them lead you out of the shadows.

Group Discussion: John says the foundational message he received is that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (v. 5). Why do you think people, even sincere believers, so often prefer to keep parts of their lives in the dark rather than bring them into the light? What do we imagine we are protecting by hiding?

Personal Reflection: John speaks of walking in the light as living honestly before God. Where in your own life are you most tempted to manage an appearance rather than face what is truly there? What would it look like this week to bring that one area into the light?

Read 1 John 1:5-10

Study Questions

1. John builds everything that follows on a single declaration: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (v. 5). What does this teach us about the character of God, and why does John make it the foundation for the whole question of fellowship and assurance?
2. Walking in the light means living honestly before God rather than pretending. In what area of your life are you most tempted to keep up a good appearance while hiding what is really going on? What would honesty before God look like there?
3. John says that if we walk in the light, "we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (v. 7). What does this verse teach about how the blood of Christ goes on working in the life of someone who is already a Christian?
4. When the light of God exposes something in you, what is your first instinct, to run from God in shame or to run toward Him in confession? Describe how you typically respond when you become aware of sin.
5. John exposes a contradiction: "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (v. 6). What is the difference between occasionally stumbling and habitually "walking in darkness," and why does John treat the second as evidence of a false claim?

6. Is there a sin or area of compromise you have quietly made peace with, telling yourself it is not really a problem? What would it mean to stop calling the darkness light and bring that area honestly before God?
7. John gives the great promise of the passage: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (v. 9). What does true confession involve, and what does this verse teach about why God can be trusted to forgive?
8. Confession is meant to be a regular rhythm of the Christian life, not a rare emergency measure. How healthy is your own practice of honest confession before God? What keeps you from bringing your sins to Him more readily?
9. John warns twice about denying our sin: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (v. 8), and “If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar” (v. 10). How does this passage steer us between the error of sinless perfectionism on one side and careless presumption on the other, and where does true assurance rest?
10. Look back across this lesson on light and darkness. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses, and the single truth from 1 John 1:5–10 that you most need to carry into the coming week.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 32:1–5, the misery of hidden sin and the relief of honest confession; Psalm 51:1–10, David’s prayer for cleansing after his sin was exposed; Proverbs 28:13, whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but the one who confesses finds mercy; John 3:19–21, coming to the light versus loving the darkness; Romans 6:3–4, baptism into Christ and the beginning of a new walk in the light.