



NG Study Guide: 1 John 1:5-10, "The Barriers and Basis of Love" [3.4.18]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: God is "light" - perfectly holy, true, good and just. And yet, He desires to have fellowship- close, personal, loving relationship- with each of us. However, we're not perfect; we all have darkness (sin) in our lives. If we claim to have a relationship with God while continuing to live in sin, we're deceiving ourselves. The only way to be cleansed of our sin is to place our faith in Jesus Christ. When we believe in Jesus and follow Him, His sacrificial death cleanses us and enables us to have relationship with God. Because we're not perfect, we'll still occasionally sin, and if we don't confess our sins to God, our relationship with Him will be inhibited. But, if we regularly confess our sins to Him, He'll continue to cleanse us and we can maintain our relationship with Him.

God is perfect [5]

John is one of the twelve apostles who spent every moment for about three years with Jesus during His public ministry- living, eating, sleeping, working, suffering, rejoicing, talking, and crying with Him. These men knew Jesus better than anyone else on earth. John wrote that Jesus came with a message, and this message was, "God is light."

In Scripture, light often symbolizes truth, holiness, purity, goodness, and justness. To emphasize his point, John includes the phrase, "*and in Him is no darkness at all.*" Darkness is usually a metaphor for falsehood, impurity, sin and evil. John is saying God is completely, utterly true, holy, pure, good and just. In other words, God is perfect!

As human beings, we have a difficult time comprehending perfection because there is nothing perfect in this world, including us. So, how can we have a close, personal love relationship with a perfect God?

I can experience a personal love relationship with God as I follow Jesus [6-7]:

"Fellowship" is the English translation of the original Greek word, "koinonia." The concept of koinonia involves the idea sharing, communion, community, intimacy and relationship. What an amazing thought to realize the perfect God and Creator of the universe wants to have a close, personal, love relationship with us!

But, John is very clear to warn that we cannot enjoy this relationship with God if we "*walk in darkness.*" "*Walk*" is a metaphor for live; it suggests a lifestyle, a way of conducting oneself in the world. John is emphasizing the truth that no one can have relationship with God if he is living in a way that is contradictory to what God commands. If someone says he can do this, he is fooling himself and not living in reality.

In contrast John says as we walk in the light, i.e., live lives of truth, holiness, purity, goodness, and justness, we have "fellowship" (close, personal love relationships) with one another, and ultimately with God (see v. 3 of this chapter).

So, what does it mean to "*walk in the light?*" How can we do this? The answer is found in John 8:12-

"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'"

Jesus is the light! Therefore, to walk in the light means to follow Jesus. Following Jesus begins with believing in Him, and when we place our faith in Him His sacrifice ("blood") cleanses us from all of our sin, making it possible for us to have a relationship with God.

But, what do I do if I sin now? How can I continue to maintain a close relationship with God?

I maintain a personal love relationship with God as I confess my sins [8-10]

The word "*sin*" literally means to miss the mark. In a biblical context, it means missing what God commands. The Word of God clearly teaches that we all sin (Romans 3:23). Even after we put our faith in Jesus Christ, we will all still occasionally "miss the mark" and do something that is not what God wants. John writes that if we believe we aren't sinful, we're deceiving ourselves.

However, the good news is that God is ready and willing to forgive us! John shares that if we confess our sin we can be forgiven and cleansed. "Confess" means to agree with; so, confessing our sin means we're agreeing with God that is it not what He wants and we need to change and stop doing it. Because God is "*faithful*" (He will do what He says) and "*just*" (He is entirely fair), we can be assured He will forgive and cleanse us when we confess our sin to Him.

Although ALL of our sins were forgiven when we placed our faith in Jesus Christ, we need to continue to regularly confess any sins of which we become aware. Sin separates from God; therefore, allowing unconfessed sin to accumulate in our lives will cause a separation in the "koinonia" (relationship) God desires to have with us. It's like letting stacks of bricks continue to build up until a wall has been created.

John emphasizes the reality of sin in our lives by asserting the fact that if we deny it, we are in essence making God a liar, because He says we have it. Denying our sin can lead to a dangerous progression from lying to ourselves about it, believing our lies, and ultimately labelling God a liar.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. How would you describe the meaning of the phrase, "God is light?"

Q2. What are some things we can do to follow Jesus closely?

Q3. What are some possible reasons why people are reluctant to confess their sins to God?

Q4. How would you like to apply this lesson in your life?

“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Take time to read this article on “How to Have Fellowship with God” from Bible.org:

<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-4-how-have-fellowship-god-1-john-15-10>

2. Using a concordance or other reference source, look up and read each instance the word, “fellowship” is used in the bible. What else do you learn about the meaning of this powerful word, and how does what you learn relate to your relationship with God?

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?

3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Resurrection Sunday (Easter) is less than a month away. Start to pray now and ask the Lord to open up opportunities for you to invite your neighbors to our outdoor, community-wide service at the Adolfo Camarillo House.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
2. **Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
3. **The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
4. **Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. **What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.