

1 John Series-This is How We Know God is Light

Good morning, Connection family! Today we are in week 2 of our series on the book of 1 John, where we're talking about how we can know God.

Last week, David gave a great intro to the book as we dove right in asking the hard question- Who is God and how do we know? The answer is simple and challenging all at the same time-Jesus. We know who God is through Jesus.

For the next stop on our journey through this book, we're going to be looking at one of the ways that John describes God-as light. God is light.

John writes:

"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. 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, purifies us from all sin..." (1 John 1:5-7)

What does that mean? How is God light? And, how do we walk in that light? Let's pray and then we'll break down.

(Pray)

We're going to be spending a lot of time today in verses that tell us- "God is Light." And I think to understand that God is Light, we've got to start by looking at what God is not-darkness.

When is a time in your life when you were really in the dark?

For me, what comes to mind is a time that someone had the "bright" idea to take 15 teenagers caving, deep underground, for fun. It was at the end of one of our summer mission trips and we had worked with some outdoor education experts to plan our trip to be the last fun excursion at the end of a long week. I was more excited about it than the students, let's be honest.

We got to the park, put on the helmets, and went over the rules with the cave guides. When we got to the entrance of the cave it was only as wide as the tunnel under the highway (pic) and we crawled for quite a distance on our hands and knees to make it all the way in. As we made our way through the cave, it got colder and narrower. In some places, the width of the cave was barely enough to squeeze through and in many places, we were knee to thigh deep in cold, muddy water. With only flashlights to guide us, it got dark very quickly.

After we had been crawling and bending and maneuvering in all kinds of ways over rocks you couldn't even see, we finally reached one of the "rooms" where we could all gather around together. Our instructor proceeded to tell us to find a spot to settle in and then one by one, he had us all turn our flashlights off.

That was the darkest dark I have ever experienced. You know when it suddenly goes dark and your eyes have to take a few moments to adjust and then eventually you can make out shapes around you ever so slightly? Well, in this case, the lights went out and there was no adjustment, just black. I couldn't even see my hand right in front of my face. My eyes could have been closed it was so dark. No light was leaking in from anywhere. It was just black nothingness. And we sat in that darkness for a few moments; it was slightly maddening.

Maybe you've had a similar experience, when you were somewhere that was really, really dark. Or maybe when I asked about a time you were in the dark, your mind went more metaphorically of a time you were "in the dark" and had no idea what was going on. Whatever type of darkness you thought about, it can be terrifying.

How does it feel to be in the dark? What thoughts go through your mind as you think about times you've experienced darkness?

Google says that 1 in 3 adults admit to being afraid of the dark. Why? I asked my 8 year old why he is afraid of the dark this week and he said- "Well yea mom, because it's fear of the unknown, I don't know what's out there." Simply put. I think we can agree.

Darkness is the absence of light. Darkness is the opposite of light. You can't see in the dark and that can make your mind wander with what might be lurking out in it.

Darkness in the Bible can mean the literal absence of light, or it can also represent concepts like evil, sin, ignorance or lack of knowledge, and separation from God.

We find darkness being described many times throughout the Bible, and it's interesting to compare them.

How about from the very beginning- Genesis 1 where God separates the light from the darkness?

"And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness." Genesis 1:4

Or in Isaiah, with the well-known Christmas scripture-

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." Isaiah 9:2

John brings it all together, saying

“God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5)

There’s many more examples in scripture of light and darkness that we could zoom in and examine but how interesting, that after just looking at these 3, we can see something pretty significant that they all have in common: **Darkness and light cannot exist together**. God separates them. When light enters, darkness flees. Light and darkness cannot exist together. If God is light, then there is no darkness in Him.

When we were sitting in that cave for a few moments (that felt like eternity) in that deep darkness, it was really, very dark. But then our cave guide did something. He took a singular, small taper candle, and he lit it. We watched in awe as the second the match was struck, it hit the wick, and the cave instantly came into the light. It wasn’t a giant 3 wick candle or a large spot light, but it very well could have been with how much light was flooded into the room of that cave. It was amazing to see exactly how much light one little flame emitted into the once extremely dark space. It was fascinating!

I often like to think about that moment in the cave and how powerfully the experience describes the ability and power that light has to chase away the darkness.

John LOVES this Light and Dark metaphor. You can go home and look all through his gospel and find many similar references to God being light. One of them comes from the first chapter where he says-

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:4-5)

Darkness cannot overcome light.

And so, what kind of power does darkness really have?

Craig Loundsbrough, a Christian licensed clinical counselor says,

“...darkness is the absence of light and therefore is totally dependent on the light remaining absent. As such, the darkness is terribly vulnerable as it possesses no means by which to stop the light other than creating fear in us.”

Wow. The fear that’s created by the darkness is what’s holding us back from the light, from God. Darkness only has the power that we give it. How many times do we allow ourselves to be held back in the fear that we’ve created? And the simple fix? Stepping into the light.

I don’t know about you, but I want to be in the light, I want to be with God.

What else does 1 John say? Let’s reread our verses today from 1 John again:

“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. 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, purifies us from all sin...” (1 John 1:5-7)

If we want to be with God, to be in fellowship, in communion, in community with God, we can't walk in darkness. If God is all things good and holy, and we want to be a part of his family, we need to let go and flee that darkness. We can't have both darkness and light in our lives. We can't have our cake and eat it too. John says right here, if we try to; we are lying to ourselves.

Like my cave story shows, I've spent a majority of my ministry years working with teenagers and I feel like this was something I preached to them like a broken record. If you are following, truly following Jesus, you have to leave your old ways behind you. You must leave that darkness.

When you choose to follow Jesus, you ACT differently. You LOOK differently. You MAKE CHOICES differently and you hang out with different people than you did before. Why? Because you have to? Because we're forcing you to follow some kind of unachievable legalism? NO. **Because coming to Jesus truly CHANGES US and others should be able to tell.**

I had one teenager, year after year, like 7th grade all the way through his senior year, who I would take on our annual youth retreat, and year after year he would say that he wanted to change. He wanted to live and love like Jesus. He wanted to make better choices and hang out with better friends. And at the altar, in that moment, through the tears and heartache, I knew he meant it. He did. And every year, right after youth retreat, he would be different, and make different choices, at least for a little bit. But slowly, he would return to his old ways and his old choices and friends and we'd have same conversation the next year at youth retreat. And this isn't me sharing something that he's not aware of, we would talk each year about how we had talked about this the previous year.

He was stuck in a cycle of thinking he was fleeing, but that darkness was still there.

If we don't let go of that darkness, we get stuck in this cycle of lying to ourselves. Of thinking that we are free and we're not. Of thinking we are in the light, but we're slowing allowing that darkness to take control.

What we really need to do is SURRENDER. To let go and let God have full control over our hearts and our lives. **Because if we have that darkness within us, we can't truly have God within us.** We can't truly be living for or as he intended us to live. We might want to be in the light, but we can't because we haven't fully let go of that darkness.

Matthew puts it this way in his gospel. **6:22-23** says:

"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

John Wesley says it like this in his sermon on these verses from Matthew, entitled, **On A Single Eye:**

"Ignorance of yourselves, ignorance of your real interest, ignorance of your relation to God, will surround you with impenetrable clouds, with darkness that may be felt. And so long as the eye of your soul rests upon all or any of these, those will continue to surround your soul, and cover it with utter darkness."

We can't just want to be in the light. We're not strong enough on our own to do this. We need help. We've got to put some action into it. And John gives us the way to do 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, purifies us from all sin...”(1 John 1:7).

We need to WALK in the light. We need to be in step with Jesus and what He has for us. Walking is a verb, it's something that we do. And it's not a once and done kind of action either. We need to be walking DAILY in the light of God.

What does that look like? How do we do it? How do we walk in the light?

Remember my last message on silence and solitude? That's a great place to start. Taking time daily to read the word and be in His presence.

Walking in the light looks like...

Practicing faith and obedience. Living a life of righteousness and truth. Choosing to obey God's commands even when it's hard.

It looks like seeking God first, and His guidance for your purpose in life.

It looks like surrendering your will, your own thoughts and desires, laying them down to be able to receive what He has for you.

It looks like being honest and vulnerable, instead of hiding your real self, sharing it with God and other believers, having fellowship and growing together.

Because what does the last part of that verse say? When we walk in the light:

“...we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin...”(1 John 1:7).

Light brings us fellowship with one another. Sin isolates and makes us lonely. The more we realize how sinful we are, the more aware we can be at the work that God is doing within us.

John Schultz says,

“If we allow the light of God to break through in us, we know that we cannot hide anything from Him and, ultimately, we will have nothing to hide from one another.”

Walking in the light is not easy. But we don't have to do it alone! We can walk alongside one another and help each other along the way. This is just one of the many reasons why you hear us say all the time- “join a small group!” Get in regular fellowship with other believers. Take that yoke that we talked about in the Ruthless Elimination of Hurry series and carry it together. Paul reminds us [in 2 Corinthians 6:14](#)

“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?”

My small group is finishing a great book called, Find Your People, by Jennie Allen, and she says in there that if you have a friendship that's “draining you faster than it pours into you, that's not a friendship, that's a ministry opportunity.” Don't get me wrong, ministering to others is good, it's faithful, it's commanded!

But we need one another to walk in the light together. And we need Jesus to purify us and make us holy. It's not a one time thing, it's an ongoing process.

John says in chapter 2 that he's writing this so that we will not sin, but he encourages us by adding that:

“But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:1-2).

Wherever you are on your faith journey, it's NEVER too late to step into the light. To turn from the darkness you've been tip toeing into. To leave it behind and turn to Jesus for good. You don't have to be perfect, you just have to be willing. And you don't have to do it alone! We're all here to walk on this journey with you.

And not IF, but WHEN you mess up, John says it in what we just read: there's Jesus. Not to condemn you or shame you, but to hold your hand and pull you back into the light, along with all of us to just keep going. One step at a time.

If you're feeling that tug on your heart, that pull into the light, maybe for the millionth time or for the first time, the steps are open. And I promise that you won't be alone; someone will be with you to pray for you and help encourage you. Let's walk in the light together.

Let's pray.

Benediction:

Great reminder for us today as we leave this morning:

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” 1 Peter 2:9

Don't leave here today and stay in the shadows. Enter that wonderful light.

Have a great week!

