

Intro: Garrison. Pastor. JCFoM. Family. 1 John 1. **Pray.**

- What if I told you that there was one thing in our church that most people think is really really weird when they're new, but it usually becomes the one of the most compelling things about our church if you stick around for awhile?
- What if I told you there is a practice that we think is absent today in the modern evangelical church but biblically, is vital to how the church was supposed to relate to one another.
- What if I told you that this is the 1 thing you might not be doing that's keeping you from deep relationships in the church.
- What if I told you that if you get this thing and do it, it can be a key to fighting your sin.

What I'm talking about is the ancient practice of Confession. Not just confessing your sins to God (although that's good and right and true and helpful, but confessing your sins to other believers).

Last week we said the first aspect of being Family is Sharing Our Lives. And this morning we're going to get into the second and equally important part. **Sharing Our Hearts.** The way we do that is by confessing our sins to one another.

So what I'd love to unpack for us this morning is that confession isn't something that we came up with. It comes from the Bible and is intended for all Christians.

Go to 1 John 1. John is going to address our need and invitation to the practice of confession in this passage. One of the ways he'll say it is through this phrase "living in the light" -- let's walk through the text together and I'll pull out some things for us.

5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you,

At the core of 1 John you've got the apostle John writing to say: here are some of the markers of what it means to be a Christian. In 2020 we did a whole study on the book of 1 John (our second sermon series btw), if you want more of the background, would encourage you to check it out.

But he starts off this section by first saying, we got this message from God, Himself. This isn't some opinion, some man-made philosophy. This isn't just a good idea he or something the other apostles came up with. This is what God has said. This is a command from God and should be taken with the appropriate amount of weight.

that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Here he says: God is light. Everything we are about to read about is first and foremost grounded in the character of God. God is light.

Now when the Bible talks about this theme of light and dark when it comes to God, our Christian faith, all of that - it primarily is talking about two things:

- 1) Revelation, or Truth - This is intellectual light and dark. So light is truth and darkness is ignorance or error. God is light means God is truth, he is the ultimate reality - about our world, our lives, Himself. And the darkness is untruths, false realities.
- 2) Morality, or Purity - Light is what is holy, pure, set apart, Godly, and darkness is evil, wrong, sin, what is contrary to the purposes of God.

So when John here says that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all...He means that God dwells in His person in truth and holiness, and in Him and around Him lies and evil cannot and will not dwell.

And as the people of God, we are called and should want to be where God is → In the light. We should be a people of truth and holiness. We live to be in the light where God is. That should be our aim, our goal.

But we don't get that right.

But John is going to address 3 ways we don't live in the light, but instead walk in darkness.

6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

In this church it's a false teaching called 'gnosticism'--- where people preached and believed that the body was completely separate from the spirit. That means whatever your body did, didn't actually matter because it didn't affect your spirit - the "real you". So it was totally possible, these false teachers argued, that you could use your body for whatever pleasure, or desires, or evil, or sin you wanted to, and still be "holy" before God.

So basically, sin was no big deal.

Totally miss the truth that we are sinners in need of a Savior. In other words, and how we might see this play out today - is the false idea that you can claim to have fellowship with God, to be in relationship with God, and see no need for the cross. Sin becomes dismissed, cast aside, seen as this outdated oppressive lie that is just there to keep people stuck in their guilt so they keep doing whatever the church or pastor wants them to do.

But none of that's true. Sin is real and it's a big deal.

Sin is the rejection of God. Sin is saying our way is better. That can look like breaking the rules. But it's more. It's elevating anything into the place of God.

So John says ok first of all, if you say you have fellowship with God (I'm a Christian, I know God), but your life and your actions say "sin is no big deal, I can just keep living in/walking in darkness however I want", you insist on continuing to walk in the darkness of sin and untruth, then you're a liar and you don't know the truth and you're not actually in the light where God is.

We are lying. Two more.

8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

What he's getting at is the false claim that we don't have a sinful nature.

But the Bible is clear - we aren't simply sinners because we sin, we sin because we're sinners. Apart from God we're not good people with bad decisions or bad circumstances. We're not upright, good human beings who just make some poor decisions or make some mistakes. At our core, in our hearts, we are twisted and crooked and sinful. Apart from God our whole being is corrupt and dead in sin.

At our core we are sinful, broken, dead in our sins. Dead people can't clean themselves up. They have to be made alive, and that only happens through the saving power of Jesus.

We lie if we say we have no sin.

10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

John then moves out to actions. The action of sinning. The action of doing what is wrong against God.

Alright so let me sum all this up just in case you missed it. John hits on the three lies. Three ways we reject being in the light with God, and instead walk in darkness. He says:

- 1. We lie if we walk in sin.**
- 2. We lie if we say we're not sinful.**
- 3. We lie if we say we've never walked in sin.**

The Bible is clear. We are sinful. Sin is a big deal. We will sin. So what's the alternative to living in darkness?

We walk in the light. We confess our sin. We repent. We seek holy lives.

Confessing sin is agreeing with God that we have sin and admitting we are wrong.

So if:

1. We lie if we walk in sin.... confess your sins to God and one another (that you may not sin).
2. We lie if we say we're not sinful... confess your sins to God and one another.
3. We lie if we say we've never walked in sin... confess your sins to God and one another.

But our response to that could still be why? Well John actually gives us 3 reasons in v 7 and 9. 2 quick ones and then one I want to spend most of our time on:

7 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. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1. God calls us to it.

Or in other words. God told me to. This text is incredibly clear what we're called to do. We're told by God in His word to confess our sins. We see this in James as well:

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. -James 5:16

It might actually be the most simple reason I'll give you this morning. God commands you to do it. Which I know for many of us, command is like a bad word. And part of that is because we worry very deeply about legalism. Doing things to earn our way to God. Following the rules to be righteous.

And we should certainly be aware of that bend in our hearts. But I think we need to not treat it like the boogeyman.. Some of us have used an fear of legalism to tempt us into disobedience.

But you have to remember, the rules were all given for your good and flourishing. We don't throw out the commands and rules because we're Christians now. In fact, in this same letter, John will say, you know how you can tell who loves God? By if we obey Him.

In fact, if you read through the NT, you start realizing that the Scriptures are much more concerned about our lack of holiness than they are the threat of legalism.

At some point we just need to say - "God commands me to do something, so I'm going to do it."

We confess because God calls us to it. #2:

2. To avoid sin.

1 John 2: 1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

He says I'm writing to you so that you don't sin! This is a huge piece of confession I think we miss. The goal of confession is not confession. The goal of confession is that it'd be a means by which we grow in holiness.

You see it? Following the commands of Scripture leads to holiness. I love how Augustine says it:

The confession of evil works is the beginning of good works.

Confession is about fighting sin. It's about growing more and more like Jesus as we get our sin into the light.

So, if you keep confessing the same sin in the same way over and over and over again, it's worth asking yourself -- are you actually confessing how the Bible would call you to?

Let me connect the dots. Confession goes hand in hand with repentance. That's what the Bible is calling us to. There's just a practical reality that you're going to be much more likely to repent when you confess your sin to another person. There's accountability. There's help.

Really practical application is to 1. Confess but 2. Pre confess. A lot of times we sin in response to something happening or to where we're at emotionally. Really great step is to confess before the thing happens.

le a phone call to a Christian friend or message to your group. 'Hey everyone x just happened, I'm stressed and want to respond in this way.' 'Hey everyone, really tempted bc of x.' That's pre confession! And it's a beautiful way to grow more depending on the Gospel.

We confess to avoid sin. Last one. And this is really our focus. We confess:

3. To gain fellowship.

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another,

Notice how it reads. We walk in the light, in truth and purity, like God, we have fellowship, yes with God, but with one another! This is the core of what he's saying.

Fellowship, as defined by Jesus, is what Tim talked about last week. Life together. The word for it that comes from Acts 2 is 'Koinonia'. It doesn't mean 'my church friends'. It means communion with one another. It's a Togetherness. Interwoven lives.

And part of the process to get there is doing life together. Like Tim talked about. Making time, in fact, orienting our schedules and rhythms around one another.

But you've also got to do this. You have to share your heart with them too, or else it won't matter if you spend 8 days a week with one another, you won't feel connected or loved because you're spending a lot of time with people that don't know you.

And I would guess that for some of us, that's our exact problem with our group. You don't feel that close to them. We hear that a lot. You spend a whole lot of time with them though(if you don't, spend time with them, you'll feel better). Well what if the issue is because they only know 80% of you? And maybe you only know 80% of them?

When we confess our sin to one another we gain fellowship. Yep, I get it, not easy.

It is a vulnerable thing to confess your sin. But when we do it, we gain fellowship. We belong. We become known. This is part of God's design for flourishing.

You were made to be fully known and fully loved. And you can't be either without confessing. Why?

Because sin is the great disconnecter, the reason for our relational breakdowns and the catalyst that launches us into hiding. And when you hide, you can't be known. If you hold anything back, there will always be something in your mind that you'll think 'if they only knew.'

As one pastor said, to be 99% percent known, is to be unknown. And you can't be fully loved without being fully known.

When we confess our sin, we gain fellowship with God and others. Togetherness. Interwoven, connected lives..

Confessing. I met Jesus a couple weeks before I went to college. No church background. No idea what to do. It was a great time. But I had lots of issues. I had no idea what I was doing. And sin was just all over my life. Especially sexual sin and pornography. And it began crushing all the new joy I had in Christ out of my life. I was floundering. I was attending this church for about 6 months to a year and finally joined a group much like our Community Groups. I remember that first night so clearly. Sitting in this nasty all college guy living room on a smelly couch, I confessed my sin to a group of Christians for the first time. It was ugly. Even now I think back and i'm slightly embarrassed, like did I overshare? Idk. But I kid you not, that night changed the trajectory of my life. Because I stuck with it and I stuck with those guys. And they confessed their sin too. And we stuck it out for years together. I knew none of them before that night. Those guys became my family. My safe place. Some of them are in the room today. And I trust them more than anyone in the world. None of that's possible without confession.

We can't have true fellowship while we walk in darkness. But if we all confess we're wrong and walk in the light together with Jesus, beautiful fellowship becomes possible.

Confession is ultimately saying 'I am wrong.' Saying that to God and others. 'I'm wrong. I sinned! I need grace.'

This both impacts our fellowship with God and people. With God, we say. "I agree with You about my sin. I'm wrong. You're right." And it's also with each other. Hey guys I was thinking this sinful thought. I was pursuing joy in this sinful path. I was wrong. God's right. Will ya'll help me walk in that?" And then we all do. That's real, deep fellowship.

And it has to be both! It shouldn't be that we're comfortable confessing our sin to each other but then if someone stopped us and said, "Hey have you talked to God about this?" ... uhhh... ummm... no. Sin is first and foremost against God so we confess to Him first and to each other second.

But you can't stop at just confessing to God either. That's the big temptation. 'Well I already prayed and confessed to God.' Why? Well 1. All the stuff we already said. But 2. If you've confessed to God, why wouldn't you confess to other people? What do I mean by that?

God is God. Perfect. Powerful. Just. Holy. If you've gone before His throne and said I have rebelled against you, my king. I've rejected you. I'm sorry. That should be scary! People by comparison aren't scary. What's the big deal of telling another sinner? Unless, you haven't really been confessing to God, but your version of God.

I think many times, if we've confessed to God but find ourselves afraid of opening up to others, we haven't truly confessed to God, but to ourselves. And we haven't sought forgiveness from God, but from ourselves. And a great step of repentance would be to confess that too!

Confess your sin. Share your heart. Do it because God calls you. Do it to avoid sin. And do it to gain fellowship with God and others.

But we also do it because Jesus has given us the privilege of doing it.:

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, ^xwe have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 ^zHe is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but ^aalso for the sins of the whole world.

In order to believe the Gospel, you have to accept your a sinner in need of a savior. But we've been outed... So you can confess! That's the beauty of the Gospel. You're covered. No need to hide. No need to walk in darkness.

We can confess. We can't do this apart from Jesus. No way!

I'd love to close by sort of wrapping up this 'Family' section of the series. Try to sum it up:

Conclusion 1 Peter 2:9-10

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

My people. Another way to say 'family' is to say 'my people.' **We all have our people.** Apart from Jesus, my people are Cole, hopefully my son in a few days, parents, Coles parents, My people. They are who I share life with, and would be willing to sacrifice for, go out of my way for, change my lifestyle for. You? no. I don't feel any sense of responsibility to help you or get to know you. if its easy, then ok, but if we don't click, if friendship with you isn't natural and easy, then no thanks, because you aren't my people. When I got married, that changed my lifestyle. Cause we are people.

And what the Scriptures are saying in the passages we just read is that all of that changes when Jesus is on the scene. He makes us a people. He makes us a family. And the way that I would've thought about my people, my family, that now applies to the family of God. Church family are now 'my people'.

So you want to be the kind of person who holds gatherings on Sundays as optional, who holds group time during the week as optional, who thinks of opening up about your sin and decisions as optional, that's certainly your right. You can do that. You just need to understand that it means that you cannot participate in the kind of community Jesus intends to create on the earth. If we don't even know if you are gonna show up, be honest, much less actually invest and give and participate, then we simply cannot move very far forward together.

But when we buy in—>Lay it all out there. Be willing to share life and share our hearts then we can really experience something beautiful. It's what Jesus intended for His bride. A counter cultural family that's committed to one another at all costs, cause that's exactly the type of commitment Jesus has shown us.

Pray.

Communion.

