

## SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

**COFFEEHOUSE FIVE CHURCH**  
**1 JOHN: THE FATHER HEART OF GOD**  
**FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD**  
**1 JOHN 1:5-10**  
**01/15/2017**



### MAIN POINT

The Christian has fellowship with God through Jesus to enjoy into eternity.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What do you associate with light? What do you associate with darkness?**

**What do light and darkness signify when they are used as symbols in Scripture?**

John's prologue (1 John 1:1-4) focuses on the historical fact of Jesus' incarnation. The Son of God was fully human as well as completely divine. Belief in that fact was necessary not only to enjoy fellowship with other believers, but more importantly, with God.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 1:5-7.**

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**What did John mean when he wrote that there was no darkness in God?**

**Why is walking in darkness and having fellowship with God impossible?**

The topic of fellowship again took center stage as John moved on to challenge false teachers who apparently stressed that one could possess an intimate relationship with God, yet live a lifestyle of his or her own choosing. Instead, the apostle stressed God as the ultimate standard of holiness. Those who truly possessed fellowship with Him would reflect His nature and character by avoiding sinful lifestyles and purposefully seeking fellowship with other believers.

**According to verses 6-7, what are some benefits of walking in the light?**

**What other benefits can you think of that aren't listed here?**

Our obligation is to “walk in the light as he is in the light.” We make a conscious, continuous decision to live life in conformity with the revelation of God, who is light. When we live in the light, we have fellowship with one another. Implied in verse 7 is that fellowship with both God and other believers is contingent on habitually aligning our lives with the nature and character of God. The apostle Paul gives us additional insight into walking in the light in his letter to the Ephesians.

**HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 5:8-14.**

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**According to Paul in this text, what should characterize the lives of those living as “children of light”?**

The comparison of light and darkness gives us the clearest distinction between the new life in Christ and old lives we used to live. Because light and darkness can’t coexist, lives redeemed by Christ’s blood and brought into the light of His truth can’t continue in the darkness of sinful lifestyles. One of the reasons selfish, secretive sins have such power in our lives, even after we become Christians, is because the shame and guilt keeps us captive in the darkness. Only in the light is the help, accountability, and support of godly community available to help us break bad habits and eradicate shame. As much as we’d like to think we have the power to conquer our strongholds alone, we don’t, and we’re not meant to.

**What characteristics are the result of “the fruit of light” (v. 9)? How do these compare with the fruit of the darkness in Ephesians 4:18-19?**

**What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping us live in the light? What role do other Christians play?**

The fruit of the light are qualities the Holy Spirit brings about in our lives to help us live as children of God. When we choose daily to live in the light of God’s truth, we put on goodness (moral excellence), righteousness (a characteristic we gain through Christ’s sacrifice for us), and truth (honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness). The fruit of the light reminds us of God’s activity in our lives while the hurt, scars, and pains of past sins remind us of our great need for God’s grace, truth, and direction.

**How have you seen evidence of the Spirit’s transforming power in your struggles?**

When we see our relationship with God overcome our struggles, we’re encouraged to love God more and our resolve to live in the light is strengthened. As you commit your life to imitating Christ and growing in faith, pray that God would show you these three things in your life: goodness, righteousness, and truth.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 1:8-10.**

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**What does John say we must do when we sin?**

**What is the result of living in denial of our sin and therefore not living a life of repentance?**

God’s entire plan for the redemption of humankind is based on the fact of human sin. Those who claim never to have sinned do not have God’s word in them. They have not accepted the gospel. Their character and conduct has not been changed by God’s power. When we become believers, God forgives all our sins. Yet, we still sin, and we still need to confess our sins. This confession removes the barrier to fellowship with God.

**Have you ever felt like your sin is too great for God’s forgiveness? What caused you to feel that way?**

**What stories or verses from Scripture can help us see the truth of God’s total, unconditional forgiveness?**

When we confess our sin, we can be confident God forgives us. Apart from our confession, nothing is required of us for God's forgiveness. He does so because He's "faithful" and "just." After our confession of sins, God will do two things based on His faithful and just character. First, He will forgive us our sins. God will cancel the debt of our sins. Second, He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This phrase pictures an act of cleansing from the pollution of sin.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What does Jesus' death and resurrection tell you about God's desire to offer you forgiveness?**

**In what specific areas of life are you working to imitate Christ? In what ways are you working to reflect His values?**

**In what areas of life is it most difficult to imitate God? Why is this?**

## PRAY

Invite volunteers from your group to close in prayer. Have one person pray we would be people who walk in the light because we are changed by the truth of the cross. Have a second person pray that we would be people who speak the truth, especially in regards to our relationship with God, and who understand and confess the reality of our sins. Then have another group member close your time of prayer by thanking God for His grace through the cross and His active involvement in your everyday lives.

## COMMENTARY

### 1 JOHN 1:5-10

The message John declared is that God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. In a number of places, Jesus referred to Himself as light (John 9:5; 12:35-36,46). Light is a picture of truth, knowledge, and righteousness, while darkness is a picture of falsehood, ignorance, and sin. John declared that God is light and in Him there is no darkness. Since God is light and there is no darkness in Him, no person can claim that he is living in full fellowship with God while walking in sin at the same time. If anyone makes that claim, he lies and is not living according to the truth (v. 5-6).

On the other hand, when we walk in the light (live in light of truth, knowledge, and righteousness), two things happen. First, we have fellowship with God. The second thing that happens when we live in the light is that the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. This strengthens the interpretation that the fellowship is between God and the Christian. To be "purified from all sin" means that those who are walking in the light have sin's defilement removed and that they experience a progressive sanctification—a progressive character transformation into the image of Jesus. All sin means every kind of sin and shows there is no limit to the categories of sin that Christ is willing to forgive. His sacrificial death made every type of sin forgivable (v. 7).

We do not know if the false teachers were suggesting that the Ephesian believers were without sin, or if that is an error the Ephesian believers fell into by themselves (v. 8). Either way, it needs to be corrected. A person might not be conscious of sin, but this does not mean he or she is free from it. On the other hand, when we grasp that we are to do all the things that Jesus would do if He were in our shoes, we fail continually. None of us loves perfectly as Jesus did. Therefore, we sin, because a failure to love perfectly is a sin. If we think we are without sin altogether, we are deceived and we live a lie.

John comforts us, however, with the truth that even though we have sin in our lives, we can still be purified from this sin and maintain our fellowship with God (and resultant fellowship with other believers). God's forgiveness of our sin is based on His justice. He is just and will forgive our sins. We might expect that forgiveness in this instance is based on God's mercy, but it is based on His justice. God is just because Jesus paid the penalty for our sin when He died on

the cross. God has promised to forgive our sins in Christ (2:2) when we confess them, and He will abide by His promises.