

January 4, 2026

“Sin and Forgiveness”
Lesson 1

1 John 1:5-10, 1 John 2:1-6

Intro

John refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” in his gospel. The love John experienced from Jesus seems to have profoundly influenced both his life and his writings. The number of times he uses the word *love* in his gospel is more than the other three gospels combined! John is always listed early in any list of all the disciples, and he is recognized as being part of an “inner circle” of disciples, along with Peter and James. In the opening verses of 1 John, he emphasizes his physical interactions with Jesus. This is likely a response to the false teaching of Docetism, which taught that Jesus didn’t have a physical body but only appeared to. This idea came from the belief that all material substances, like a human body, were inherently evil, so it was inconceivable that Jesus would partake of such a form. John sets out to give a true account of who Jesus is.

Read 1 John 1:5-10

1. vs. 5: John says the message “we have heard”

This was what Jesus said to *all* the apostles, not just to John alone
The phrase “God is light” is not found in any of the gospels
But John says that not everything Jesus said or did was recorded (John 21:25)
Light is a fundamental part of God’s being, not just a simple character trait
Light and dark represent good and evil, especially to those familiar with the OT
If God embodies light, logically God possesses no aspect of darkness

2. vs. 6: This is the first of 5 consecutive “if we” clauses

The first thing is the claim to have fellowship with God
Fellowship implies an intimate, close relationship and communion with God
However, a lifestyle inconsistent with God’s nature shows a false relationship
John here calls it a *lie*
To “walk in darkness” is to sin habitually
One must walk in the light, not the darkness, to accurately claim fellowship with God
This means behavior that aligns with what Jesus taught
These actions don’t bring salvation; they reveal that one is saved
What has happened internally becomes apparent by external actions

3. vs. 7: The second “if we” clause is if we “walk in the light”

This is more than just a close fellowship with God
John says that walking in the light also includes having “fellowship with one another”
The two go together—they are connected
Walking in the light also reveals sin, and our need of cleansing from that sin
That’s what the blood of Jesus does
If “purifies us from all sin”
This is John’s reminder that we can’t do anything to save ourselves from sin

4. vs. 8: Now comes the third “if we” clause

This appears to be addressing an issue presented by false teachers

No one can claim to be without sin; we are all sinners, both before and after salvation

But apparently some were teaching that once saved, a person can’t sin again

The false teachers were not only fooling others with this, but also fooling themselves

John contrasts this idea with “truth”

More than 40% of the appearances of the word “truth” are in John’s gospel/epistles

John says if we claim to have no sin, “the truth is not in us”

5. vs. 9: Here is one of the most quoted and memorized verses in the Bible

The fourth “if we” clause begins with us confessing our sins

We are admitting to God that we have failed, have fallen short of His expectations of us

Note also that the word is “sins” (plural), not just “sin”

This leans toward all the sins we’ve done, not just one or our tendency toward sin

The promise is heartening:

If we confess our sins, God forgives us of them

Sin is not forgiven by what we do; it is a plea to God that leads to forgiveness

We are not merely pardoned (as good as that is)

We are also *cleansed* from all our acts of unright behavior

6. vs. 10: In the 5th “if we” clause, there is a connection to vs. 8

In both, there is a claim not to have sinned

In vs. 8, John says we are deceiving ourselves if we think this

Here in vs. 10, John says we are saying God is lying if He says we are sinners

Either God is right and people are sinners, or the people are right who say they aren’t

Our stance must be that God is right

Sin is a real thing

We are guilty of committing sins

Disbelieving God in this area is calling God a liar, causing more self-deception

Read 1 John 2:1-6

7. vs. 1: John calls his readers “dear children”, showing he views himself as a father to them

He is not writing just to instruct; he is giving life lessons to his “family”

John doesn’t want them to commit sins, but he gives them hope when/if they do

Jesus is their advocate to God the Father

An advocate is a mediator or intercessor who speaks on behalf of another

Jesus now sits at the Father’s right hand, a place of honor and influence

Jesus continually advocates for us to the Father, says Rom. 8:34 and Heb. 7:25

8. vs. 2: An “atoning sacrifice” is something that turns away wrath

Jesus is the sacrifice that atones for our sins

This concept is echoed in Rom. 3:25, Heb. 9:5, Luke 18:13, and Heb. 2:17

Jesus can be our mediator because He has no sin, and He died for us as sinless

His death as a sinless offering paid the debt we owe for the sins we have committed

9. vs. 3: Here is the 6th “if we” statement

Keeping His commandments is proof that we “know him”
Again, keeping His commandments doesn’t equal salvation
As before, it is proof here of our relationship with God

10. vs. 4: Loving God means also showing actions that prove that love, John says
One can’t say they love God if they do things that He says not to do
A person’s actions and words must be consistent in this area

11. vs. 5: Obedience to God’s word is the key here
John says (like in vs. 4) that doing what God says shows love for Him
This love manifests itself in how we act toward others—we show the love of God

12. vs. 6: John concludes this passage with a simple but key phrase:
“Whoever claims to live in Him must live as Jesus did.”
The word translated “live” can also be translated “remain” or “stay”
This speaks of a close, ongoing connection with Jesus
Our relationship with Jesus is shown by “abiding in Him”
We reflect His love and His teachings in how we speak and act

Application: John uses a fatherly tone in this letter to address a crucial topic: claiming to live in the light while walking in darkness is deceitful. His point is very clear and straightforward—our walk must match our talk. Jesus brought out the same point in Matt. 7:21-23, saying that many will tell Jesus what they did, but Jesus says “I never knew you”. These people didn’t have a relationship with Him. In our spiritual walk, Jesus is the standard. We must ask ourselves if we see a reflection of Him in our walk or a contradiction. Authentic faith calls for both self-examination and then willingness to correct our walk where and when necessary.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for Jesus’ light. Thank You for John’s reminder that when we abide in You, we walk in the light. Help our walk match our talk, and help us make the changes necessary so that the two are aligned. In Jesus’ name, Amen.