

FALL 2021

YOU



NO DOUBT

SIX THINGS WE CAN
KNOW FOR SURE

+ + +

**WALKING IN
CONFIDENCE**

NO DOUBT:

SIX THINGS WE CAN KNOW FOR SURE

HOW THIS STUDY FITS YOUR'S DISCIPLESHIP PLAN

+ + +

Live Unashamed.

The Book of 1 John gives us multiple assurances related to our walk with Christ. With such assurances, doubts fade, and we can live our lives undaunted and unashamed.

Writer Bio

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A BIBLE STUDY ABOUT ASSURANCES WE HAVE IN CHRIST

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In 1789, Benjamin Franklin penned this quote in a letter to Jean-Baptiste Le Roy: “But in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.”¹ Benjamin Franklin was discussing the perceived permanency of the Constitution. But he knew better.

Like Franklin, we understand there are very few certainties in life. And we know the world would be a much better place in which to live if we had solid assurances related to our day-to-day lives. For example, we want to know for certain our jobs are secure so we can pay our bills. We want to know for certain that if we have a need to go to the hospital, doctors will bring us back to health. We want to know for certain that if we exercise and eat right, we can live a long, healthy life. We want to know for certain that if we save our money, we will have a comfortable retirement. But, let’s face it. Stuff happens, and stuff can happen suddenly.

One day we may go to work and discover we don’t have a job any longer. We may go to the doctor and be given a detrimental, life-altering prognosis. We may exercise and eat right and still face health issues. The stock market may crash and all of our financial investments will be gone.

All is not lost! As followers of Christ, we have assurances that are not in the world. We can rest in the many promises from the Word of God. This study guides us through six things we can know for sure from the Book of 1 John. The study will include the certainty of forgiveness, a relationship, the truth, victory, God’s love, and salvation.

Things are not certain in the world. We can lose a job. We can have a health scare. We can lose money. But we can find assurances in the Word of God. Then we will realize there really are more certainties in the world than “death and taxes.”

SURE OF FORGIVENESS

Leader pages on pp. 102-105

THE POINT:
WE ARE FORGIVEN
WHEN WE CONFESS
OUR SIN AND WALK
WITH CHRIST.

1 JOHN 1:5–2:2

^{1:5} This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him.

⁶ If we say, “We have fellowship with him,” and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth.

⁷ If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

.....

⁸ If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

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MEMORY VERSE

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

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

.....

^{2:1} My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous one.

² He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

KEYWORDS

Confess (1:9) – To confess means “to say the same thing,” “to agree.” In this verse, to confess specifically means to agree with God about our sin.

Advocate (2:1) – An advocate is a person who “helps,” who “provides aid.” Jesus is a legal counsel to defend Christians,

particularly from His position in heaven.

Atoning sacrifice (2:2) – The words mean that God has provided His grace through Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross so that people can be accepted by God.

WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE FORGIVEN OF OUR SINS?

Can we be sure of anything? Some philosophers will tell you we can't. After COVID-19 arrived last year and shook up our lives, nothing seemed certain.

We can have assurance, though. God desires for every believer to have assurance of salvation. Sadly, many Christians struggle daily with doubt as it pertains to their eternal destiny. Some even believe it's impossible to know with certainty that a person is eternally saved. At other times, believers who are not sure of their salvation find themselves plunged into the depths of doubt and despair, uncertain of whether or not God has truly forgiven them. Others allow their own self-condemnation to smother the assurance God desires for them to have.

But we can be assured of assurance! The apostle John stated this clearly in 1 John 5:13: "I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." We have God's assurance of eternal life even as we have the assurance of our forgiveness.

Turn from Darkness // 1 John 1:5-7

The character of God is the foundation for our forgiveness. When John wrote, "God is light," he described the very nature of God. Since He is light, "there is absolutely no darkness in him" (v. 5). To describe God as light refers not only to His holiness, but also to His moral goodness. In His perfect righteousness and goodness, God determines the terms for our forgiveness. God's terms are clear: we are forgiven when we confess our sins and commit our lives to walk with Christ.

We are forgiven when we turn from darkness to light. John underscored this by looking at this truth from two sides.

- **Darkness.** "If we say, 'We have fellowship with him,' and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth" (v. 6). The idea of walking refers to a person's way of life. If anyone lives a life of continual, unrepentant sin and claims to be forgiven, he is tragically mistaken.



THE POINT: WE ARE FORGIVEN WHEN WE CONFESS OUR SIN AND WALK WITH CHRIST.

The gospel's powerful work in our lives is what moves us from darkness (sin) to light (salvation). "He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14). The ones whose lives have been transformed by the power of the gospel are transferred to the kingdom of the Son and their sins are forgiven!

- **Light.** "If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (v. 7). When we turn from darkness and walk with Christ, we are assured of forgiveness. To walk in the light is to live a life consistent with the will of God. Of course, this does not mean we are perfect, but that the trajectory and the purpose of our lives has become the pursuit of God.

WHEN DOES IT FEEL THE MOST DIFFICULT TO WALK IN THE LIGHT?

Tony Evans wrote: "Every week, people have the habit of taking clothes to the cleaners that have been soiled. The job of the cleaners is to freshen them up and get them smelling good again." As Tony Evans said, "Jesus has a cleaning service. He picks up dirty people who have allowed, for one reason or another, their lives to take a turn down the wrong path. And at his cleaning service, Jesus knows just what to do to wash you and make you clean again."² Jesus is the One who "cleanses us from all sin." This is the beautiful message of the gospel: Jesus gave His life to save dirty sinners like you and me. If your life pattern is turning from darkness and pursuing holiness, then don't doubt God's forgiveness toward you.

Confess Our Sin // 1 John 1:8-10

In verses 5-7, John gave a darkness and light contrast to stress we are forgiven when we turn from darkness to light. In verses 8-10, he used a similar negative and positive pattern:

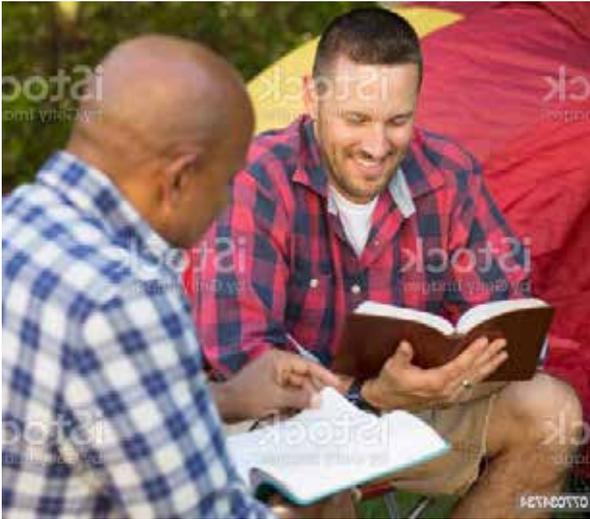
- **Deception.** "If we say, 'We have no sin,' we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (v. 8). Failure to admit sin is a mistake of the highest order. Why would a person fail to recognize and confess sin? Many can't see their own sin because of self-righteousness and self-deception.



DIGGING DEEPER OUR ADVOCATE

An advocate is a person who speaks in favor of, argues a case for, and defends on behalf of someone else. In our day and time, there are child advocates whose primary role is to look after a child's best interests. Essentially, they make sure that the needs of a child are met. As children of the King, we also have an Advocate. Our Advocate is Jesus Christ (John 14:16-21). He serves many roles in this capacity. He's our High Priest, our lawyer, our comforter, and our friend to name a few. He walks with us, having paid a spiritual debt for our sins, lifting us up, pleading our cases before God. Every time our Savior advocates for us, we receive the same judgment: NOT GUILTY! He makes us righteous before the Father. There is no other One like our Advocate, Jesus Christ.

How does knowing that Christ is your Advocate impact your Christian walk?



- **Self-righteousness.** A self-righteous attitude says, “I’m not that bad; as a matter of fact, I’m pretty good compared to some people. Therefore, I have nothing to confess.” When sharing Christ with a young man, I asked him if he had ever sinned. He stated without hesitation, “No!” I asked him if he had ever lied, stolen, or lusted. His answer reflected the self-righteousness of our day. He said, “Of course I’ve done those things, but I thought you were talking about murder and adultery. You know, stuff like that.” Before our conversation was over, he saw how he had broken the entirety of the law of God; sadly however, his pride still would not allow him to confess to God.
- **Self-deception.** Air Florida Flight 90 crashed into the Potomac River on January 13, 1982, killing 78 people. Even though they knew better, the pilots convinced themselves that further de-icing of the plane was unnecessary. They were tragically wrong. People deceive themselves when they try to justify and make excuses for their sins. To deny one’s sin is to call God a liar.
- **Confession.** The opposite of deception is confession. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins

and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (v. 9). We are forgiven when we look at our sin in light of Christ’s righteousness and willingly confess our sin for what it is: wickedness against God Himself.

IN WHAT WAYS DO WE SOMETIMES DECEIVE OURSELVES ABOUT OUR OWN SIN?

You have no reason to doubt forgiveness when you confess your sin and walk with Christ. The trustworthy character of God secures the promise of forgiveness. I’m sure you have heard it said that a promise is only as good as the person giving it. Consider then, who is making this promise? God is “faithful and righteous,” and His promises are true.

Depend on Our Advocate

// 1 John 2:1-2

John assured his readers, “If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous one” (v. 1). The word for advocate literally means “one who is called to come alongside another.” It’s the counselor for one’s defense in a court of law, a person who intercedes for someone else. I can think of nothing more encouraging than to know Jesus is the One who stands up on our behalf. You have no doubt of forgiveness when Christ is your Advocate.

The foundation of Christ’s advocacy is the blood He shed for our atonement. The reason for atoning is to appease an offended party. Jesus, through His death on the cross, satisfied the righteous indignation of God. However, we are not to perceive God as some pagan deity who is reluctantly appeased because of blood being shed. On the contrary, God the Father provided the sacrifice Himself; thus, He satisfied His wrath by giving His only Son to die in our place. Furthermore, Christ willingly gave His life as our substitute.

THE POINT: WE ARE FORGIVEN WHEN WE CONFESS OUR SIN AND WALK WITH CHRIST.

Therefore, when we sin, Christ pleads our defense based on His finished work upon the cross, which the Father lovingly gave and received. This truth is truly good news! Christ died for the sins of the world. The extent of His atoning sacrifice is for everyone who believes—regardless of skin color, ethnicity, or economic status. He died so that people from every tongue, tribe, and nation could know Him and praise Him.

WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT THAT JESUS IS OUR ADVOCATE AND AN ATONING SACRIFICE?

Patients often need blood transfusions after severe accidents or during surgery. Better than any artificial blood, the blood of Jesus saves everyone who receives it. Those who come to Christ face no compatibility issues, and they will find no scarcity of supply. When you find yourself in doubt, depend on Jesus as your Advocate and your atoning sacrifice, the One who shed His own blood for you.

Turning from darkness, confessing sin, and having Jesus as our Advocate and the One who shed His blood to atone for our sins leaves no room for doubt. Therefore, we can be certain

of forgiveness because we have confessed our sin, and we walk with Christ.

DID YOU KNOW?

Botham Jean was sitting in his home on September 6, 2019 when he was shot and killed by Amber Guyger. She mistakenly thought Botham's apartment was hers. A tragic accident took place and a 26-year old lost his life. He was known by others as a church going accountant. What made this case extraordinary was what took place at the sentencing hearing. Brandt Jean, Botham's younger brother, forgave the defendant. He boldly stated through tears, "I know if you go to God and ask Him, He will forgive you. I want the best for you because I know that's exactly what Botham would want for you. Give your life to Christ. I think giving your life to Christ is the best thing Botham would want for you."³ What a powerful example of forgiveness! Because of his forgiveness, he was awarded the 2019 Ethical Courage Award by the Institute of Law Enforcement Administration in Plano, Texas.

How can forgiveness give you peace?

LIVE IT

How can you better focus on forgiveness when you confess your sin and walk with Christ?

Just ask yourself this question, "When have you experienced a time when the promises of God were not true?" All of us should respond with a resounding, "Never." So we can also trust the promise of Christ's forgiveness when we confess our sins. We have God's assurance of eternal life even as we have the assurance of His forgiveness. Place your focus on these options this week.

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- **Focus on freedom.** Spend time in prayer, focusing on Christ and the freedom you have through Him.
- **Focus on confession.** Every time you recognize you've sinned, stop what you are doing, immediately confess it to God, and ask for His forgiveness. Reread 1 John 2:1-2.
- **Focus on forgiveness.** Ask the Lord to reveal to you any unforgiveness you've held in your heart against someone else. If appropriate, speak forgiveness to that individual and spend time in prayer.

DAILY READINGS

1. I AM FREE

// ISAIAH 55:6-7

“Your sentence has been pardoned.” These are words that many incarcerated individuals long to hear. Guilty or not guilty, many prisoners are provided a chance to plead their case to a governing board. This board consists of people that can grant the prisoner a parole and an opportunity to re-enter the general population. The prisoner will stand before the board talking about how he or she has been rehabilitated and can be a productive citizen. The outcome is based on the judgment of finite individuals. But praise the Lord! We serve an infinite God who hears our honest, heartfelt confession and grants us freedom from our sins.

All we have to do is turn to God, confess our sins, and He will freely pardon us.

2. A LESSON LEARNED

// PSALM 32:5

Toddlers will many times try to cover up their wrongdoing. For instance, they might sneak a cookie from the cookie jar. When asked, they will deny what they have done. But what they failed to realize is their little faces are covered with crumbs. As Christian parents, we will prompt our child to ask for forgiveness. This teaches them the correct response to sinful behavior—admit and confess. They will learn that the response to admitting and confessing will be forgiveness. Just as earthly parents forgive their children, so does our heavenly Father. All we need to do is admit and confess our sin to God. It's the same lesson we learned as children.

The bonus is we don't have to carry the burden of sin. We will be free to faithfully follow God.

3. ALL-FORGIVING GOD

// COLOSSIANS 1:13-14

Many of us have done some things of which we are utterly ashamed. We sometimes hold on to these past sins because it seems impossible in our human minds that the Almighty God could forgive some of what we have done. But thank God we have the

assurance of forgiveness found in this verse. We are forgiven of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. Yes, it is hard for people to forgive, but our God is an all-forgiving God who loves us.

Because He has forgiven us, we have been brought into His eternal kingdom.

4. THIS LITTLE LIGHT

// MATTHEW 5:14-16

Many of us learned the song, “This Little Light of Mine,” many years ago. This song basically states that no matter where we are, we should be a light. We are to let this world know we represent Jesus Christ. We hide our lights when we don't speak up because we are ashamed of Christ. We hide our lights when we do what a sinful crowd is doing. We hide our lights when we don't tell others about the Christ we serve. The song refrains; “all in our homes, all on our jobs, everywhere we go.” These phrases emphasize that even in the darkest places, people should see our light as we represent our Father. Our life just might influence someone else to want to know Christ.

Let your light shine so the rest of the world can see to whom you belong.

5. MADE FOR GOOD WORKS

// EPHESIANS 2:10

Although mostly a lost art, there are still cobblers in various parts of the world. Cobblers are shoemakers who understand the essential nature of shoes; they protect our feet. Therefore, quality is essential to cobblers, whether they are building custom-made shoes or repairing worn-out shoes. Just as cobblers craft quality shoes, we are crafted by God. Anything God crafts is a masterpiece. We are extraordinarily made by a skillful Father. He lovingly made us to do His will, which includes serving Christ and building up His church. We were not made for our own works, but for good works. This knowledge should motivate what we do for God.

When we have this view, it becomes easy to keep the focus on Christ and not on ourselves.

LEADER GUIDE

STUDY 1 NO DOUBT:

SIX THINGS WE CAN KNOW FOR SURE

INTRODUCTION

Philosophers might raise the idea that we can't be sure of anything. Science tells us we can be sure of what we see and observe, but what about those things we physically can't see? Some people think that matters of faith are just things we hope are true or that we want to believe are true. The Book of 1 John tells a different story. "Intangible" things like

love, forgiveness, and salvation can be seen in how they impact and transform our lives. We can be absolutely sure of the things of God and the way He seeks to work in our lives.

Writer Bio

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wrote the leader pages for this study. He holds dual master's degrees in divinity and theology from Princeton Theological Seminary as well as a D. Min. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He has over 30 years of preaching experience and currently serves as the associate pastor at Pleasant Grove in Cary, N.C. For more information about Dr. Joseph's publications, please check out his website: www.disciplemakerministry.com.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Prepare Yourself

Take the time to read all 5 chapters of 1 John to gain a thorough understanding of John's theology, the purpose of the letter and his main theological points. Get familiar with the learner pages so you can answer questions as you teach. Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal to you what you need to learn so you can share from your the heart.

Promote the Class

To promote the study, first send an email or text to group members encouraging them to read chapter one of the Book of John and the first session of the student pages. Then ask that information about the study be included in Sunday morning announcements. Also use social media to encourage people to attend the class. Get all class members involved in spreading the word.

LOOK BACK

Remind learners that the last sessions of the previous unit focused on how to lead others to serve God. Remind learners that leading people to serve God is part of the work of the Great Commission. Share that they can lead others to serve God by their words, attitude, actions, and lifestyle. Invite volunteers to share their experiences of leading others to serve God.

TEACHING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Begin the session by asking volunteers to share any experiences with forgiveness or unforgiveness. Discuss the Bible's definition of forgiveness and its implications for Christian discipleship. Remind learners that forgiveness is God's gift to humanity through Jesus Christ. Share with learners they can be assured of forgiveness because of God's amazing grace and His unfailing love for His

creation. God desires for every believer to have the assurance of forgiveness. Invite a volunteer to read John 3:16. Encourage learners not to walk in guilt and shame as redeemed sinners. Instead, they should walk in the light of Christ as they proclaim the gospel of truth.

TRANSITION: Review **Pack Item 1: "No Doubt"** unit overview poster. Share **The Point: "We are forgiven when we confess our sin and walk with Christ."**

DIG INTO THE TEXT

Turn from Darkness // 1 John 1:5-7

SHARE: Read the **Lesson Question: "What must we do to be forgiven of our sins?"** Tell learners this session will empower us to be certain of forgiveness of sins because of Christ.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read 1 John 1:5. Discuss John's theological statement God is light.

ASK: How does the sinlessness of God reassure believers of their eternal salvation?

EXPLAIN: The character of God is the foundation of our forgiveness and the basis for our assurance of salvation. Use the commentary (p. 104) to point out how sinners are forgiven when they turn from darkness to light. Share how John uses the word "light" figuratively to represent righteousness and what it means that God is righteous.

EMPHASIZE: When we give our lives to Christ we turn from darkness and are reassured of forgiveness and salvation.

READ: Recruit a volunteer to read verse 6.

ASK: What does it mean to live in the light?

GUIDE: Explain that the only way the world will know we have fellowship with Christ is by reflecting His righteousness. Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins, "The character of God ..." (p. 12). Then read the two bullets about "darkness" and "light" (pp. 12-13). Remind learners that light and darkness cannot coexist. In the same way, sin

THE POINT: TRUST GOD EVEN WHEN YOUR FAITH IS TESTED.

and righteousness oppose one another. Discuss what sinners must do to be forgiven of their sins.

READ: Enlist a learner to read verse 7. Lead learners to discuss how walking in the light helps us to have fellowship with Christ and with one another.

SAY: Though COVID-19 has greatly impacted our sense of normalcy and has left us feeling vulnerable and unsure about the future, we can still be assured of the forgiveness of God.

ASK: What are practical lessons learned from 1 John 1: 5-7 that can help us keep their faith in Christ during the pandemic?

SAY: Summarize point one “Turn from Darkness” by saying we are assured of our forgiveness when we turn from darkness to light.

Confess Our Sin // 1 John 1:8-10

READ: Recruit a volunteer to read 1 John 1:8-10.

GUIDE: Explain why it is important for believers to confess their sins. Lead learners to discuss what confession is and the biblical basis for confession. Then read the commentary for verse 9 (p. 105) that begins “John expressed the ...”

ASK: Why is a failure to admit sin a major spiritual mistake? Discuss the reasons why a person may fail to recognize and confess sin. (See pp. 13-14.)

EXPLAIN: When we confess our sins we agree that God is faithful and righteous. Use the commentary (p. 105) to further discuss this point.

SAY: God can only cleanse us from all unrighteousness if we confess our sins.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to reread 1 John 1:10.

ASK: Are there people in this world who claim God is a liar? Guide learners to discuss how we fall into that category when we claim to be without sin. This is calling God a liar.

SAY: Summarize point two “Confess Our Sin” by highlighting deception and confession. Give an example for each. Discuss some of the ways we sometimes deceive ourselves about our sin.

SAY: Point out that confession is good for the soul and healthy for spiritual growth.

Depend on Our Advocate

// 1 John 2:1-2

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read 1 John 2:1-2.

GUIDE: Use the commentary (p. 105) and the “Digging Deeper” feature (p. 13) to guide learners into a dynamic conversation about what it means to have Jesus as an advocate. Discuss why John switches his tone in 1 John 2:1-2 and the theological significance of that switch. Remind learners that the language of 1 John 2:1-2 reflects the love of a pastor for his congregation and his concern for their spiritual growth.

ASK: What was John’s stated purpose for writing “these things?” Share how that “stated purpose” sheds light on the doctrine of confession. Invite learners to answer the question (p. 14): “How does this passage help you be sure of forgiveness?”

SAY: Remind learners that God made provisions for all sinners so we do not live in a state of condemnation.

ASK: Why is it significant that Jesus is our advocate and atoning sacrifice? Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins “The foundation of Christ’s advocacy ...” (pp. 14-15).

OBJECT LESSON: Use the Object Lesson (p. 104) to demonstrate advocacy. Because of Jesus’ advocacy we can turn from darkness to light and walk in forgiveness.

DID YOU KNOW?: Invite a learner to read the “Did You Know?” feature (p. 15) and ask the question that follows the feature.



PACK ITEM 1

CLOSE THE SESSION

Remind learners that they can be assured of their forgiveness because of the love of God through Christ Jesus. Remind them also that salvation begins from the confession of our sins and is reassured by the advocacy of Jesus Christ.

PRAY: Invite learners to take a moment to think about any unconfessed sin. Lead learners into a prayer of confession: “Father we confess our sins, and acknowledge the forgiveness we have through Christ Jesus. We thank you for the assurance of salvation we have as followers of Christ, and we pray for the Holy Spirit to help us walk in the light of Christ.” Close by asking the class to sing the hymn “Blessed Assurance.”

OBJECT LESSON

DO: Before the session download the video titled Best Closing Statement Ever (A Time to Kill 1996).

GUIDE: Play the video and explain that this is a sample of the work of an advocate. Say that Jesus is not only the atoning sacrifice for our sins, He is also our Advocate. Invite learners to share what it means that Jesus is our Advocate.

CHALLENGE: Encourage them to read 1 John 1:1-5–2:2 whenever they feel overwhelmed with the guilt and shame of their sinfulness. Share that we should not deceive ourselves into thinking we do not need an advocate. Share with them that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Emphasize the need for daily confession of sins for a right relationship with God.



COMMENTARY

1 JOHN 1:5-7

Verse 5. Verse 5 begins the first major section of this epistle (letter): 1 John 1:5–2:2. This section begins with the truth stated positively as God is light and negatively as there is absolutely no darkness in him. In the remainder of our Scripture for this session, John presented three false claims countered by three truths.

Verse 6. John presented the first of three false claims in verse 6. Some were claiming to be Christians (we have fellowship with him) yet were living in darkness (sin). Instead of this claim being true, John responded that those who claimed to have fellowship with God but whose actions did not reflect that claim were lying and ... not practicing the truth. John revealed the real test is not what we say; rather it is what type of life we live.

Verse 7. The truth, John said, is to live like Jesus. In both the Old and New Testaments, the word translated walk describes how a person lives. Therefore, if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light means we must live like Jesus. Jesus said: “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Light refers to righteousness, to living like God’s nature.

1 JOHN 1:8-10

Verse 8. The words If we say introduce the second false claim. These words reflect what the false teachers were affirming and John was combating. Scholars debate how the words “We have no sin” should be understood. Some believe the false teachers claimed we have no responsibility for our sin—that social, economic, heredity, and/or other circumstances are to blame. Others believe the false teachers asserted that “We have no sin” means sin has no effect upon us; Jesus already paid the price so what we do does not matter. Whichever understanding is correct, God’s judgment is

clear: we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Verse 9. John expressed the truth in verse 9. The Greek word usually translated if could also be translated “when.” Confess translates a compound word in Greek that means “to say the same thing.” To put it another way, to confess means “to agree,” so we are to agree with God about our sin, our missing God’s mark of righteousness. According to God’s Word, the prerequisite for forgiveness is confession. When we agree with God about our sin, we acknowledge that God is faithful and righteous. These words express the character and nature of God Himself as well as of the people who live according to God’s commands.

John elaborated on God’s forgiveness by adding an additional phrase: to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. God’s forgiveness and His cleansing work together, like two sides of the same coin. Rather than two distinct actions, these two words describe the extraordinary measure God takes to make us acceptable to Him.

Verse 10. The false teachers’ claim in 1 John 1:10 is similar to their claim in verse 8, but more far reaching. The Greek grammar of verse 8 indicates the false teachers were describing presently sinning. The grammar of verse 10 indicates the false teachers were claiming to have never sinned. Further, the result of the false claim in verse 8 is deceiving ourselves (bad); the result of the false claim in verse 10 is that we make God a liar (worse). John put it another way, God’s word is not in us. The claim is a direct denial of Romans 3:23 that all have sinned. God’s word, whether that means the Bible or Jesus Himself, cannot be in a person who claims to have no sin or to have never sinned. God’s truth countering this false claim is found in 1 John 2:1. We are forgiven when we confess our sin.

1 JOHN 2:1-2

Verse 1. Being forgiven requires we depend on Jesus as our Advocate. In 1 John 2:1-6, John wanted hearers to resist sin. He did not condone

sin; in fact, he urged believers not to sin. But John did not condemn the sinner; he pointed out the only way to forgiveness: Jesus Christ, our Advocate. First John 2:1-2 is the truth that corresponds to the false claim expressed in 1 John 1:10.

The Greek word translated advocate is used only five times in the Greek New Testament; it refers to Jesus in this verse, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in John 14:16, and the Holy Spirit in John 14:26; 15:26; and 16:7. Putting the Greek word into English produces the compound word paraclete made up of the preposition meaning “alongside of” and the verb “called,” together meaning “to help,” “to provide aid.” Jesus is legal counsel to defend believers. Jesus our Advocate does for us what we are not qualified to do for ourselves.

Verse 2. The word translated atoning sacrifice is used in the New Testament only here and 1 John 4:10. Another way this word is frequently rendered in many older translations is propitiation. The word propitiation comes from the Latin and refers to a sacrifice to appease an angry god. The idea of this Greek word in the Bible is not that of appeasing an angry God but rather changing our character that causes our alienation from Him. God has provided His grace through Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross so that people can be accepted. The word picture includes the Old Testament background of animals serving as temporary sacrifices until Jesus, the Lamb of God, was revealed and completed His mission of saving sinners (Matt. 1:21; 1 Tim. 1:15). Through Jesus Christ, the believer’s fellowship with God is begun and maintained. God has removed the barrier and punishment for all who believe.