**Grace Group Guide**

**9/6/17 – 1 John 3: 4-10**

Because of the importance of our text from this week and the glaring contrast it presents in the face of 21st century Christianity, I want us to take a detailed look and ask some difficult questions during our time together. Pastor Steven Cole has laid out some excellent discussion questions relating to this passage so those are what I’ll be sharing for our consideration. Before we visit those questions, let’s refresh our minds to the text. In addition to your bibles, I’ve also included a lengthier, in depth paraphrased version of the text from Kenneth Wuest:

*"Everyone who****habitually commits sin****, also****habitually commits****lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. And you know absolutely that that One was manifested in order that He might take away our sins; and sin in Him does not exist. Everyone who in Him is****constantly abiding****is not****habitually sinning****. Everyone who is****constantly sinning****has not with discernment seen Him, nor has he known Him, with the result that that condition is true of him at present. Little born-ones, stop allowing anyone to be leading you astray. The one who****habitually does righteousness****is righteous, just as that One is righteous. The one who is****habitually committing sin****is out of the devil as a source, because from the beginning the devil has been sinning. For this purpose, there was manifested the Son of God, in order that He might bring to naught the works of the devil. Everyone who has been born out of God with the present result that he is a born-one of God****does not habitually commit sin****because His seed remains in him. And****he is not able habitually to sin****, because out of God he has been born with the present result that he is a born-one of God. In this is apparent who are the born-ones of God and the born-ones of the devil. Everyone who is****not habitually doing righteousness****is not of God, also the one who is****not habitually loving his brother****with a divine and self-sacrificial love.”*

1. **John says that a child of God *cannot* sin. Does he mean that we will no longer desire to sin or have to struggle against it?**

David Allen sheds some light on this when he writes: *This passage has caused confusion because it seems that verses 6 and 9 imply that a Christian cannot sin. At first blush it might appear John has contradicted himself based on what he has already said in*[*1Jn 1:8-10*](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20John%201.8-10)*and*[*1Jn 2:1*](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20John%202.1)*. However, a closer inspection reveals that is not what John means. Both grammar and context provide the interpretive key to solve the problem. Notice how many times phrases such as “practice of sinning,” “keep on sinning,” and “practice righteousness” occur here. The use of “practice” and “keep on” in the ESV translators clearly renders the present tense aspect in these verbs. This is the key to a proper understanding of what John is saying. Our attitude to sin as Christians is of vital importance to John. Apparently, the false teachers John is combating were indifferent to sin. This is something that should never be true of a Christian. You can be no more indifferent to sin than you could be indifferent to a rattlesnake in your house.****There is an important distinction to be made between a state of purity and a maintained condition of purity.***

*Suppose you walked through a dark room with a lighted candle, and upon exiting the room, the room remained lighted because the candle had passed through it. Such a condition is impossible! If this were possible, the room would no longer be dependent upon the candle for its light. It would only be indebted to the candle for its introduction of light into the room. Sin is darkness, and Christ is the light. What the candle is to the dark room, Christ is to our hearts. By the light of his indwelling presence he keeps sin away. The cleansing we experience is not a state but a maintained condition; a condition that can only exist because of Christ’s presence in our life. Light dispels darkness, but the tendency to darkness remains. A room can only be maintained in a condition of illumination by the continual counteraction of that tendency. We are constantly dependent upon Christ’s presence in our lives to counteract the constant tendency to sin. In*[*1 Jn 3:4*](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20John%203.4)*-8 John states or imply several things about sin. He tells us what sin is, what sin does, why sin is, from where sin comes, and how sin is conquered.”*

1. **Why is a right knowledge of sin at the root of all saving Christianity? How does this relate to the user-friendly “gospel”?**

Consider Genesis 1:11 and Matthew 7:18.

1. **Can a person who tolerates some glaring sin in their life be truly saved? How would you deal with them?**

This is a difficult question to ask and perhaps even more difficult to answer. The point of this question, as well as the others is to bring us to a better understanding of what the life of the believer should look like according to the scripture. If we aren’t dealing with sin in our own lives in a biblical way, we certainly can’t point others in the right direction. I want us to consider these questions also because we never know when we might have the opportunity to confront (lovingly and in truth) those who might be living deceived by a message that they are saved but lack any of the proof of that which John writes about.

Bruce Hurt said “As a physician I used to perform **paternity testing** in the Blood Bank and so I found this comment from Daniel Akin interesting – ‘The foolproof test in this paternity dispute is to *take swabs of lifestyle*, and the one that shows *no evidence* of someone doing the right thing can’t be God’s child.’ That works in medicine and it works in theology. No fruit, no root. No changed conduct, no changed heart. No changed spiritual life, no changed spiritual family!”

**What other scriptures come to mind as we consider the strong implications of Johns words?**

**In closing, before we beat ourselves (or anyone else) up too badly with the righteous stick, be encouraged by these words from Major Ian Thomas from his book, The Indwelling Life of Christ as we are reminded of the source of the new life we have in Christ:**

*“All the wickedness of which our old nature is capable today, it will be capable of tomorrow, or fifty years from now if we are still living. There is absolutely nothing salvageable within it! In all my attempts to harness the flesh, and all my painful endeavors to "be like Jesus", it was such a relief when I began to understand that I have been trying to do the impossible. God has never expected us to be anything but the hopeless failure we are. "The character does not change for the better by improving the flesh, but only by allowing it to be replaced by the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can render its pernicious appetites inoperative. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked' (Jeremiah 17:9). Be persuaded therefore of the wickedness your own heart, and humbly confess it before God. Never be shocked or dismayed at the amazing capacity for sin that lies within you, for this is the nature of your case. It’s only when you're honest enough to face up to these facts that you will have, on the one hand, a big enough view of what the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to do for you; and on the other hand, the desire to let Him do it!"*