

LIVING RIGHT IN A WRONG WORLD

STUDY THREE

God's Light and Our Blight

1 John 1:5–10

John says, “God is light.” That single term captures the essence of God’s nature. It means God is all good. Nothing bad. God is all pure. Nothing impure. God is all clean. Nothing dirty. God is all right. Nothing wrong. God is all light. Nothing dark. Without God’s light, we would never find permanent release from our darkness.

—Charles R. Swindoll

THE only way to master a skill is to practice it. You can know what a hammer does by observing how others wield it. But gripping it yourself, lifting your arm into the sky, and pounding in the nails demonstrates your knowledge *and* expertise.

Similarly, anyone can explain the power of a sports car after sitting on the front row of a race and watching it zoom by faster than you can twist your neck. But nestling in the driver’s seat and taking it for a cruise gives your spine a deeper experience of its power *and* shows your ability to control it.

Using knowledge demonstrates our real understanding of it.

This maxim also proves true regarding spiritual knowledge. Faith in Jesus shows its true colors through our changed lives—what we say and what we do with the faith we possess.

John emphasized this correlation when he wrapped up his preface and quickly began correcting mistaken views about sin. Knowing a holy God and fellowshiping with Him should translate into godly living. Some denied this truth in John’s day. Some deny it still in ours. In this study, we explore John’s clear connections between what we know of God and how we live our lives



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

God's Light and Our Blight

1 John 1:5–10



PREPARE YOUR HEART

God extends His comforting hand and lends His listening ear to us as we seek Him with a humble heart. Follow this model prayer as you posture your heart in this way.

Thank You, Father, for the magnificence of Your presence. In Christ alone, we have a reason to go on. In Christ alone, there is hope. In Christ alone, there is forgiveness. Deliver us from the plurality of false gods amid this culture so we can decipher truth from error and remember our Savior's words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me." Use this study to help me better appreciate Your truth. In Jesus' name, amen.¹



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As we learned in our first study, John longed for his readers to experience deep and authentic fellowship with God, to walk with Him in *an abiding and transformative relationship*. However, not all in the church who claimed to be walking with God were showing it with changed lives. After sharing in 1 John 1:1–4 his reason for writing—"that you may fully share our joy," John next explained how we can identify others who enjoy genuine fellowship with God.



Observation: Affirming That God Is Light

When reading the Scriptures, we must use good observation to achieve an accurate and correct understanding of God's Word. Good observation entails noting words and phrases that are repeated, alike, unlike, and contrasted.² In 1 John 1:5–10, John makes special use of contrasts to emphasize his key ideas on fellowship.

Read *1 John 1:5–10* in your two favorite translations. Do so repeatedly. Reading aloud often helps us catch what we miss when we read silently.



God's Light and Our Blight

1 John 1:5–10

God's Character Is Holy

What is the gist of John's proclamation in 1 John 1:5? What contrast does John's proclamation have?

The term *light* captures the essence of God's character. He is all light and no darkness, which means that He is all goodness and no evil, all purity and no impurity. What other contrasts can you think of that describe the "all-and-no" nature of God?



Chuck's Commentary Insight

First John Theme: Light

False gods, past or present, pale in comparison to the one true God, who is light. This is vitally important because without His light of purity and holiness in our lives, we dwell in constant spiritual darkness. It is a simple fact that in the physical world, as well as in the spiritual world, darkness can't continue when it encounters light. Light always dispels darkness.³

Since God is all light, we can rest assured knowing that not even the slightest shadow of evil clouds His actions. We, on the other hand, have a sin nature that needs to be addressed.



God’s Light and Our Blight

1 John 1:5–10

Our Nature Is Sinful

According to the doctrine of depravity, all humanity is born with a sin nature. Jesus said that to enter God’s kingdom, we “must be born again” (John 3:7), which occurs when we trust in Christ who atoned for our sin and arose to give us new life (Titus 3:4–7). Through Christ, we *can* fellowship with God who is light. And, as we draw closer to Him, He can help us deal with our sin.

Unfortunately, false teachers in the first-century church were misinforming believers about sin. In 1 John 1:6, 8, and 10, John pointed out three wrong perspectives toward sin through three “if we say” clauses. Describe the errors and John’s reasons why these are errors.

Verse	Errors	Reasoning
1:6		
1:8		
1:10		

The tragic result of the false teaching was that believers were not taking seriously their sin. Some were *ignorant* because they thought they could have fellowship with God and still sin. Others were *self-deceived*, fooling themselves into thinking that they had no sin to deal with. Still others proudly claimed *perfection*, saying that they had no sin nature.

John points us to a better way to deal with our sin—cleansing confession. Let’s find out more in the next section of our *Searching the Scriptures* study.

John’s desire for his readers is not only that we take our God seriously, but that we take our sin seriously. A connection is missing if you grow up and grow older in the faith and in God’s grace, and yet you begin to take sin lightly. Something is vitally wrong there.
—Chuck Swindoll



God's Light and Our Blight

1 John 1:5–10



Interpretation: Our Hope Is Confession and Cleansing

Interpretation helps us discover in Scripture timeless truths about God and our world. These truths pave the path toward fellowship with Jesus.

John contrasted the errors of false teachers with two truths of authentic Christians in 1 John 1:7 and 1:9. We'll break down each verse into multiple components. In 1:7, how did John align true Christian character with God's character? What are the two outcomes if we live "in the light, as God is in the light"?

According to 1:9, what two aspects of God's character did John mention? What two outcomes occur when a Christian confesses his or her sins to God? Explain how those outcomes relate to God's character.

When we trust in Christ, the Spirit of God indwells us and gives us eternal life. As God's Word saturates our lives in the power of the Spirit, it aligns our heart and mind with Jesus' heart and mind. That process, in turn, shapes our lives. John underscored this truth throughout his ministry.

Listen to me. If you are follower of Christ, every waking moment of your life the blood of Jesus is cleaning you. It's the divine detergent. It keeps on cleaning you. Otherwise, at every fork in the road, you'd go the wrong direction. He's cleaning up your mind, He's cleaning up your motives, He's cleaning up your thoughts, He's cleaning up your actions, He's cleaning up your words. What's the result? We're able to enjoy a relationship and an intimacy and a oneness with Him. —Chuck Swindoll



God's Light and Our Blight

1 John 1:5–10



Correlation: The Power of Confession

John emphasized the importance of acknowledging our sinful nature and the sins we commit after we place our faith in Christ. We don't naively claim to be sinless, nor do we arrogantly turn a blind eye to those times we do sin. We confess our sin before God.

James, the brother of Jesus, also emphasized the power of confession from a different angle—person to person. Read in [James 5:16–18](#) what James wrote about confession, especially as it relates to prayer. Summarize what James wrote and why he believes confession is important.

Doctors have proved time and again how our mental health and emotional health affect our physical health. Each person's being is fearfully and wonderfully and mysteriously united. Confessing sin and receiving forgiveness rejuvenate us like cool spiritual water hydrating a parched, weary soul.



Application: Walk in the Light

Intimacy takes root in the soil of honesty. John's message in this passage is simple and direct: be honest with God, honest with ourselves, and honest with others. When you stray, set it on fellowship's table. Don't deny it. Don't neglect it. Don't excuse it. Rather, own it, confess it, learn from it, and leave it behind as you walk in the light.

Chuck gives two application guidelines to help us in this effort.



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1 John 1:5–10

Live Each Day Walking in the Light

Before your foot hits the floor in the morning, resolve to walk in the light. Pray for the Spirit's strength. Think over the area of life where you're tempted to neglect the light or take the reins rather than allow God's Spirit to have control. How can you better follow God's wisdom?

As You Continue Each Day, Remain Aware of Your Own Dark Nature

We don't live in fear's shadow or wear a constant grimace because of our dark nature. But neither do we act like our sinful nature doesn't exist. How can you remain aware of your own dark nature and maintain the humility that should accompany it?

John's proclamation floats gently like the tip of a theological iceberg—"God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all" (1 John 1:5). Now, after a little study and reflection, we better appreciate the power, the depth, the majesty of that simple truth. *How grateful we are to know it!*



God's Light and Our Blight

1 John 1:5–10



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You alone dwell in unapproachable light, but through Your Son, You have abolished death and brought life and immortality into the light. Thank You for giving me eyes to see that glorious light. Please give me the wisdom and strength to walk by that light in a world that so often encourages darkness. In the regal name of Jesus, I pray, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. See John 14:6.
2. To review Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website sts.insight.org. If you do not have the Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary on 1 John in your library, *grab a copy* at Insight for Living Ministries' web store.
3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 14 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2018), 31.

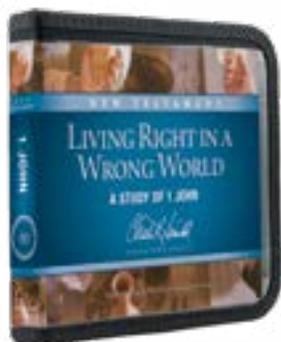


God's Light and Our Blight

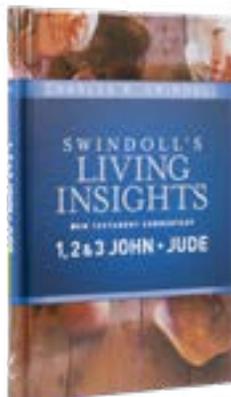
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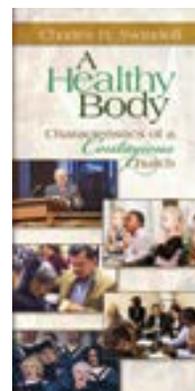
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

