

Walking in the Light of Christ-like Love

Good Afternoon City Life. Today we are going to continue our series on 1 John. We are going to be in 1 John 2:7-14 and we are going to be talking about what it looks like to walk in the Light with your brothers and sisters in Christ. This is important for us to know because this is one of the main ways that we make Christ known and experience Christ like love. When this love between us is missing darkness takes over and relationships dismantled. For instance have you ever experienced betrayal from someone you thought was for you? Or have you ever desired to be reconciled with someone you loved only to be hated by them even more? Or has someone pursued reconciliation with you only for you to give them the cold shoulder? This is why it is important for us to know how to walk in love as a community. So we are going to look at three things, 1) The new commandment, 2) Light as a community, and 3) Encouragement to those who are in the Light. But before we start let's pray.

1) The new commandment:

1 Jn 2:7-8 says, *“Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. 8 At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.”*

The first thing John does is refer to these men and women as the beloved. These men and women that John is writing to are people that are “dear” to him. These are people that he loves. These are faithful believers. These are men and women who he does life with. So think about those around you that you do life with as we go through this. Think about your community. John goes to tell them that what he is going to write about is nothing new in one sense but is new in another sense. So in what sense is this a new commandment.

To answer that, let's consider the old commandment that they have heard. What is this commandment that they have heard? You can find it in Deut. 6:5 and Lev 19:18 where it says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Deut 6:5) “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.” (Lev 19:18, italics added)

This is straight from the old testament. So it is an old commandment. Nothing new.

In Matthew 22:37-40 they came up to Jesus and asked Him:

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” 37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Last Sunday we went over 1 John 2:1-6 which was an emphasis on Knowing God and Love for God. Whoever keeps his word in him truly the Love of God has been perfected vrs 5. Focusing on the first greatest commandment. John here is wanting us to lean in on the second greatest commandment – Love for neighbor.

But why is Love for God and Love for neighbor the 2 greatest commandments?

Because like Jesus said “on these depend the whole law and the prophets.”
Meaning that if you obey these two commandments the rest of the law will follow.

How so? Because If you love God above all else you wouldn't want to dishonor or bring shame to his name. Which means you will not want to lie, steal, commit adultery, or murder (to name a few) because of your love for God and because you know that you, claiming to be a Christian, are a representative of God on earth.

For example, I was talking to Jonathan Lee when he was interviewing for a job. In the interview they told him that he wouldn't be able to take Sundays off which means he wouldn't be able to worship on the Lord's day. But because of his desire to put God first he declined the offer. And people there are making anywhere from 5 to 10k a month. Jonathan Lee was willing to decline the offer in order to put God first. As a representative of God on earth, he showed that love for God was greater to him and he didn't want to dishonor his name, but instead wanted to glorify his name with the people of God on the Lord's day. Since then the Lord has blessed him with a great job where he can have weekends off.

The second greatest commandment is to love neighbor as yourself. If you put God above all else, you will want to love neighbor because of your love for God. The second flows from the first. Which means again that you will not want to cause harm to your neighbor. You will not steal from them, lie to them, or murder them.

And in verses 7-11 he focuses on love of neighbor. To love those who are around you. Love for your community. Of course, the command to love your neighbor includes those who are not in the household of faith, but here John is talking about love for neighbor applied to those who are in the faith. Love for brothers and sisters in Christ. And when we do this, when we love our brothers and sisters in Christ, the world will see and will long for the love that we have with one another. It impacts all our neighbors and the darkness starts to dispel. This is the power of the old commandment – Love of neighbor

Now, we know why it is old, but why is it new? If it's not really a new one, then in what sense is it new?
Let's find out. In John's Gospel Jesus says to his disciples in John 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

What did Jesus add? He added “just as I have loved you.”

Loving your neighbor has always been the commandment, but now that Jesus came, *he showed us the perfect example of how we ought to love one another*. So, the new commandment is loving like Christ loved us.

How did he love us? This is a Self-Sacrificial love. Not just loving neighbor as yourself, but regarding one another as more important than yourself (Phil. 2:3-8) and even being willing to die for your brothers and sisters in Christ. That's a love on a whole different level.

Have you experienced this type of love? Have you seen it in others? This mindset to regard one another more important than yourself comes from Phil. 2:3-8 where Jesus who is God, who has everything in heaven leaves heaven, puts on flesh, dwells among us, and dies a terrible death all in the name of love for us. He leaves heaven. A comfortable beautiful home for us. That's Self-Sacrificial love for his people.

So let us have this mindset. Being willing to leave comfort in order to love you neighbor is being like Christ.

It reminds me of Andrew and Mary Norton. Everytime something brakes in our house they are there. And when they show up they are joyful, willing to leave their comfortable home to love us. They didn't have to go. They could've chosen to stay in their living room relaxing after work, but instead they choose to use their time to model Christ like love and leave comfort for their neighbor. We need more of this in our communities. Self-Sacrificial love.

In verse 8 John goes on to say that this new commandment is true in Christ and in them "because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining."

The way the word light is being used here is describing a light that is never kindled and and never quenched. As opposed to the light of a lamp which needs someone to put oil in it to kindle the light of the lamp and can be quenched by human hands.

This true Light that John is using here is never kindled and will never be able to be quenched. It is an unstoppable light! It is the Light of Christ! And he says that this unquenchable, unstoppable light is in them as well! It is the Light of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit in them.

This unstoppable, unquenchable light, without a beginning and without an end, is in them. And as they go throughout their week, as they are at home with the family, as they go to work, and as they sleep, this unquenchable light is in them and it is in you as well brothers and sisters in Christ.

God is light and those who are in the Light are in God. The True Light was shining then and is shining now!

Now what does that have to do with loving one another? One of the evidences that you are in the Light is that you are walking in the new commandment. Walking in self-sacrificial Christ like Love is proof you're light. God is Light and God is Love. Walking in the Light means Walking in Love. It is this Light, (the light of Christ, the light of the gospel) that is extinguishing the darkness.

When the light of the gospel entered your own heart it started extinguishing the darkness in you and as we continue to proclaim the gospel it enters the hearts of others and causes the darkness to pass away in their hearts and the light of Christ takes over their hearts. And as the light takes over our hearts we start to love one another as Christ Loved us. Then the Kingdom of Light starts being victorious over the Kingdom of darkness.

Which is why John says that "Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness." It doesn't add up. It doesn't mix. Which brings us to our second point. Light as a community.

2) Light as a community

Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰ Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 1 Jn 2:9-11

Walking in the light is walking in the new commandment which is walking in love. Walking in darkness is disobeying the new commandment which is walking in hate. If you say that you are in the Light but hate your brother, you are a walking contradiction. You are still in darkness.

John here is concerned with actions. Actions speak louder than words. That's why he says that the one who "says" he is in the light. The one who proclaims with lips only. Those words have no meaning because they are not grounded in reality. Loving God and loving one another as Christ loved us is the same as walking in the Light.

And I gotta say, one of the most destructive type of people that you will find are those who claim to be Christ followers but are a walking contradiction. A lot of them are wolves that only care about themselves and use the name of Christ for their own gain. These are individuals that we need to expose. They are blind and don't know where they are going heading to their own destruction and want to take others with them. Knowingly or not knowingly they are puppets of Satan.

This is why it is important to walk in the light as a community because when you walk in the light it extinguishes the darkness.

Okay we get the point Ivan walking in the light is walking in the new commandment which is Christ-Like love. But what does it look like to walk in the new commandment? I'm glad you asked. Let's look at the one who gave us the new commandment and lived it out for us as an example. We are going to look at how he loved one of his disciples to keep it simple, namely, Peter.

You don't have to turn to these passages, you can if you want, but you don't have to.

In Matt. 16:17-18 Jesus asks his disciples who do you say that I am? And Peter response by saying "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."

Although this isn't the main point of this passage, you can almost hear how encouraged Peter was by Jesus. So here we see an example of Jesus encouraging Peter.

And so we ought to encourage one another as an act of love.

So When you see someone do something Christlike, encourage them. It makes me think about Peter. When someone is discouraged sometimes I just want to say "just go talk to Peter." Peter is always praying for people, encouraging them with his prayers, and he has a way of telling you something that you need to work on without offending you and you end up leaving super encouraged.

But of course, we can't just have Peter encouraging all of us, we need to do it too. We need to encourage one another.

In Luke 22:31-32 Jesus prays for Peter. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

So we ought to pray for one another as an act of love.

When we know someone is about to go through an intense trial do we pray for them? Or do we just say, "He'll be alright." Or what about when we see people sin? Do we stop and pray for them? Or Do we just judge them?

What if we chose to pray for each other before anything else? Before sending that text or making that call?

I wonder what difference it would make if we started with prayer for one another.

In Matt. 16:23 Jesus confronts Peter for not walking in the will of God. It says "But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

That's perfect love speaking by the way. So we ought to confront one another as an act of love if we are not walking in the will of God.

Have you ever been in a situation where someone you loved was heading to a terrible path? And you knew that if he or she continues in that path they will destroy their life? What do you do? Do you tell them the truth? Do you set up that meeting to talk to them about it? I thank God that in my life God has put brothers in my path that are willing to tell me the truth because they love me. This is uncomfortable, awkward, but necessary. Self-Sacrificial love demands it.

If you are wondering on how to do this I will share with you what I do. The first thing you want to do is pray for them and for your heart. Remind yourself of the gospel and how patient God was with you and go with that mindset. Ask for advice and how to handle that situation. Ask for prayer for both of you. Then set up the meeting to talk your brother or sister in Christ. Remember that they are family and you are doing this out of love for them and for their joy in Christ.

I believe we do really good in a lot of these as a church. We encourage one another really good here in City Life. We pray for one another, and of course we can always grow in praying for one another, but over all people here are eager to pray for each other which is great.

I think in restoring one another we do a great job. If someone is down members are great at coming alongside them and restoring their joy by pointing them back to Christ. City Life, I want to encourage you in that. When you continue to do these acts of love, you are walking in the Light. You are showing what it means to love one another. So I praise God for you because you are walking in the Light.

What I believe is harder for us is to confront one another and expose false teaching for one another because we don't want to mess up the relationships that we have with each other. So we stay silent.

Because we are really good at encouraging one another this area is hard for us. But love demands it.

Vrs 10 says that "whoever loves his brother abides in the light and in him there is no cause for stumbling."

Because he is in the light there is no cause for stumbling for him and for those that are watching his example. You can be sure that other brothers and sisters in Christ are watching your example. And if they see that you tolerate false teaching, they will

tolerate false teaching. If they see that you never confront sin they won't confront sin either. And I can't speak for everyone here, but I know that I myself watch what is being tolerated by others. Especially as a man, I watch how men that I look up to handle sin and false teaching as it creeps in their life or in their church. And I learn from their example.

As a matter of fact, John is writing this to them, in part, because there were false teachers deceiving and causing division between the believers. Later on in the letter he will point out that some left the faith. He says they went out from us because they were never of us, but nevertheless they left because of false teaching. False teachers that claimed to be in the light but their actions were not matching up.

Walking in the Light means praying for one another, encouraging one another, and yes restoring one another, but it also means loving each other so much that we are willing to confront sin in each other, and speak against false teaching because of our love for each other, even if it causes discomfort in the relationship. We are not here for comfort; we are here for Christ-like self-sacrificial love.

And everything we do must be done in love. For the joy of your brother and sister in Christ... walk in the Light of Christ.

I just experienced yesterday someone who deceived me and made me think he was a Christian. I ended up trusting him and believed his story. I felt bad for him and I wanted to help him. After all he was a believer in my mind, a brother that needed help. And if I didn't come through he would lose his job and wouldn't be able to move his family from India to the US, the promise land.

It turns out he was a wolf in sheep clothing. Long story short, he ended up taking advantage of us and I never heard from him again. I was at fault for not being able to discern the signs of darkness. Things like these can happen to you too specially as a Christians.

We want to go the extra mile for others, but you have to be on the alert, because there is people out there who will say that they are in the light but are in darkness.

This is why we need to be willing to confront false teaching, confront sin, or at times even warn our brothers and sisters about the people they are hanging out with. People that will take advantage of them and deceive them if we don't have the courage to tell them about the darkness that they are around.

But brothers and sister in Christ "The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining!" This is how the darkness passes away in us, in our church, and in our city. As we walk in this wholistic Christ-like love the light shines bright and dispels the darkness.

You might say, "man Ivan that sounds hard, walking in the light sounds difficult." It is. But thank God you are not doing this in your own strength. Remember the true light is already shining and this true light is in you right now.

You are being sent by the power of the Holy Spirit to let this true light shine in you and through you to the world. You are not alone and never will be ever again. You are His. And you belong to a community of Light that will be with you as you tackle darkness, as you need encouragement, or just some one to listen to you. We are here for each other as a family.

After I went through that darkness yesterday and felt anger, wanting vengeance. Love started to overflow our family.

I called Pastor Jonathan once I realized what had happened and he joined me in my sorrow. I got text messages from both brothers and sisters. Matt encouraged me to not let the enemy take my joy. Peter Craig left me a prayer in my voicemail which was so encouraging to here. Sarah Hampton was texting both my wife and I and reminded us that his mercies are new every morning. David Hampton called me, encouraged me, and prayed for me over the phone.

The community of Light answered and showered us with love. After all the love we received from the community Ashley and I were able to laugh about it. It still is emotionally hard, and we still feel humiliated, but we were able to trust the Lord and are now back in the light.

So I want you guys to know that you are not alone and I want you to be encouraged to keep on fighting the good fight.

Which brings us to our last point – Encouragement to those who are in the Light.

3) Encouragement to those who are in the Light:

In 1 John 2:12-14 John ends this section by encouraging the believers and assuring them of their faith. To the children he says your sins are forgiven for his name sake and you know the Father. To the young men he says you have overcome the evil one, you are strong, and the word of God abides in you. To the fathers he says you know Him who is from the beginning.

This is all Gospel. Sins are forgiven – that's Jesus death, burial, and resurrection. You are strong, you have overcome the evil one, and the word of God abides in you– they are strong because of Christ in them, they have overcome evil because Christ overcame the evil one for us, and the word of God abides in them, the word became flesh. Jesus is the word. And the fathers know him who is from the beginning – who is from the beginning? – Jesus.

And by the way, this is not talking about literal children, literal young men, or literal fathers as in merely a physical thing. This is talking about maturity in the faith.

Take a look at Children for instance, their sins are forgiven, and they know the Father. They are born again believers who have repented of their sins and are forgiven, but that's it. They are spiritual children and we praise God for them because they are our family now! Their sins have been forgiven like our sins have been forgiven! Which means they understand the gospel.

Young men are adults now. They aren't kids anymore they are adults. Mature adults. Who can discern right from wrong, good from evil because the word of God abides in them. They know the word and therefore they are strong adults.

In City Life we have both men and women who are spiritual children and we have both men and women who are spiritual adults. We also have spiritual fathers and mothers who are wiser and have gone through more trials and they know him who is from the beginning. Pointing to a deeper knowledge and maturity in Christ than the young adults.

This is why you can have a 30-year-old discipling a 50 year old by the way. If the 50-year-old just got saved he will need

someone to disciple him who is mature. And a lot of time this is someone who is younger than them in age but older than them in the faith.

But the point is that John here is assuring them of who they are in Christ and who they belong to. He's encouraging them. And I want you, brothers and sisters in Christ, to be encouraged in who you are in Christ. You are the light of the world. You are the ones who are walking in the light. And we are not talking about a perfect walk. We already established that if you sin you have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ who is a propitiation for our sins. He died for our sins and your sins are forgiven. We are going to sin, but you are still the people of Light. And I praise God for you who are staying faithful. For you who continue to walk in the light with your brothers and sister even when it gets tough.

For those who are just now starting to follow Jesus who have believed the gospel, I praise God for you if that's you, welcome to the family of God your sins are forgiven. These are brothers and sisters who have understood the gospel and are just now starting to follow Jesus.

A lot of times you can recognize them by their passion for Christ. This should be true of all us, but when you just get saved there is a unique passion to want to go all out for Jesus.

Their light shines bright and they are unashamed to let it shine. Praise God for these brothers and sisters. We need them to remind us of our first love.

For those of you who have been fighting the good fight, who have overcome the evil one, who are strong and the word of God abides in you, I praise God for you, keep on fighting, keep on persevering for your light shines bright and we can see it.

These are brothers and sisters who have shown perseverance. Are immersed in the word and our passionate but still desire growth. And they want that growth, they are humble, teachable and look forward to growing more in knowledge of Christ and wisdom.

They are usually eager to serve those who are older in the faith and want to walk alongside them like Elisha and Elijah until the mantle is passed to them.

We are thankful that you are here for you are needed greatly both for the encouragement of the younger ones and the older ones. I praise God for you.

For those who are like fathers and mothers to us, who know him who is from the beginning, I praise God for you, your guidance to the younger men and younger women is greatly needed. We praise God for your wisdom, patience, and love.

These are men and women who have been tried in multiple ways and have learned from their victories and failures. These are the men and women you want to be around with. I would encourage you to pick their brain, humble yourself and learn from them and you will be greatly blessed.

Fathers and Mothers we are thankful for you and thank you for your patience with us younger folk.

I'll remind you again of Jesus words in John 13:34 where he says "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

The ultimate act of Love that Jesus showed us was the cross. Jesus willingly died for men and women who hated him. He died for my sins and he died for your sins that we might have life. Eternal Life with Him one day.

So we to should have this mind in us for one another. We should be willing to die for one another like Christ died for us. And as we do this, the light of Christ shines brightly and extinguishes the darkness. And by this all people will know that you are Jesus' disciples, if you have love for one another. True Christ-Like self-sacrificial love. That is what it means to walk in the light with your community. Let's pray.