



**Watch the Sermon**



**Read the Scripture**



**Submit a Prayer Request**



**Don't journey alone!  
Join a Small Group**



**Need Information  
or Help?**

### Opening Questions

Albert Einstein was once quoted as saying - "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle." The other is as though everything is a miracle. Of Einstein's two ways living life, which one do you think you hold to? Can you give an example from the way you lived your life this past week?

### Read Together

1 John 2:28 - 3:10

### Big Idea

Membership has its privileges - belonging to God has some amazing benefits.

### Discussion Questions

1. Read verse 28. What reason does John give his readers for "remaining in fellowship" with Christ.
2. Take a look at 1st John 3:1 and John's description of how those to whom he writes are part of God's family. Now think about earthly fathers and the heavenly Father that John describes. Is there a connection between the courage called for in verse 28 and the fact that it is a heavenly Father that we are related to in verse 1?
3. Read verses 2 and 3. What does John tell us about what we'll be like when Christ appears? Turn to Romans 8:28-29 and read it as a group. What further information does Paul give us in these verses about what is taking place in our lives between now and Christ's return?
4. Read verses 4-10 together. And then allow everyone in the group to read those verses again on their own quietly for a couple of minutes. What do you think John's main point is in these seven verses?
5. Look at verses 6 and 9 specifically. John is writing about our relationship to sin as those who belong to God (or as verse 9 puts it - those in whom God's life exists). What does John say about our relationship to sin?
6. Let's get more personal. As highlighted in the weekend messages, John highlights three benefits of belonging to God. First, we're adopted into a family with a Father who loves us. Second, we're being changed by God's ongoing work in our lives. And thirdly, we're being made pure through God's presence in our lives. Of these three benefits, which one seems most real and least real in your life today?
7. Read the Illustration of the Lake below. Then have different people read Romans 5:1, Romans 8:1, Hebrews 4:16 and 1 John 2:1-2. Does this illustration ring as true of how we ought to relate to God from those Scriptures? Why or why not?

#### The Illustration of the Lake

Imagine a lake, maybe 100 meters across and so wide you can't see a way around in either direction. On the other side stands someone you long to see - your best friend, your spouse, a boyfriend or girlfriend. But you can't walk around the lake because bushes bristling with thorns and needles cover its banks. To complicate things even further, the lake water is so polluted and full of poisonous snakes and amphibious eels that it's not safe to wade in, let alone swim. You have no boat and none is in sight. What do you do? You yell back and forth across the lake in a deep unsatisfying relationship.

That lake represents your sin and the person on the other side of the lake is God, whom you want to be close to more than anything else in the world. And the question is - How do you get to Him? The answer is you don't. Not unless you can find some way to remove the sin from your life. But you've got another problem because you're pouring more and more sin into that lake every day. Many of us heard an illustration similar to that just before giving our lives to Christ. It's an accurate picture of someone who doesn't have life in Christ. But that illustration - which we as believers often hold to as describing ourselves - makes no sense for one who belongs to Christ. So why do thousands of Christians, now possessing the righteousness of God, live as if this illustration still depicts their relationship with God?

When we hold to that view of our relationship with God, we'll always feel distant from Him, imagining that our pile of sin separates us from God. It's as if our salvation never took place. And striving to deal with our own sin on our own actually keeps us stuck in unresolved sin and immaturity. It produces just the opposite of what we're working for! Piles of sin build up that we are incapable of dealing with that separate us from God on the other side of the pile. We just keep trying to chip away at that mound of sin, all the while realizing creating a bigger pile. Then, each time we manage to change a behaviour or not give in to a poor choice, we think we've really accomplished something when actually we've done nothing at all.

Grace teaches us to trust that God can handle our sin and only God. We will only begin to experience a growing freedom from sin when we are willing to say: Lord, I can't handle my sin, I can't save myself and I can't change myself. Thank You, God, for already making me pure so You could stand with me, ready to address my sin out there in front of us. Lord, thank You that there is no pile of sin and junk that keep me from being able to talk to You about this. If there were, I wouldn't stand a chance of intimacy with You because I know I can't survive away from You. I've been thinking that this particular sin would fulfill and satisfy me. But Father, as we look at it together, I'm learning to trust Your assessment of what will satisfy me. So, what do You want us to do about this sin? I'm not going to pretend that I can manage it or get it out of my life on my own. I trust You for the next step.

Being able to say this means that we boldly approach the Throne of Grace as God's dearly loved children just like any son or daughter who has blown it should be able to do with a father who loves them. Before the Throne of Grace, we leave all our good intentions and all our I-can-do-it-on-my-own's behind and we begin to take sin seriously. And before the Throne of Grace, we admit and honour Jesus as the only one who can deal with our sin and help us overcome it.

This trust acknowledges the seriousness of our sin and it weakens our dependency on our own abilities while strengthening our dependency on that which can truly defeat the power of sin. Now when we mess up, we can say, "Lord, this sin doesn't surprise me a bit. I hate that I am prone to sin, I am practiced. I expect that kind of thinking to trip me up at times.. As a matter of fact, I can't even handle that sin, and on my own I can't even stop that sin. That's how powerful I believe sin is. I need You now.

Do you really think God would make it so hard to live a life that pleases Him? What if we didn't have to work so hard? What if God meant it when He said, "I will never leave you or forsake you"? What if God, knowing that we don't have the power to address our sin, could walk around that impossible mass and right up to us? What if He could put His arm around us and actually enjoy helping us overcome our sin right now - no matter how much unresolved sin we have in our life? What if we could both stand together, looking at "my" sin, not for the sake of condemnation, but to solve it together? What if we took responsibility for the fact that we are the ones who sinned, and then with God at our side turn to trust His provision for the very sin we've just committed? What if we truly believed we were without condemnation? What if grace was that strong?

### Challenge

This week, consciously commit to what 1 John 2:28 challenges us with - "Remain in fellowship with Christ so that when He returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from Him in shame." Be prepared to share with your group next week about how you have remained in fellowship with Christ this week.

### Prayer

Take some time to pray together focusing on God's character revealed to us as Father. Use brief prayers that follow the format of "Father, I praise You for Your...." or "Father, I thank You that You have...." Finish your time together by praying the Lord's Prayer out loud.

### Next Step

This week, download a free copy of Practicing the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence. This book highlights the story of Brother Lawrence, a seventeenth-century French monk, who learned to practice the presence of God (in other words "remain in fellowship with Christ" at all times. Through a collection of conversations and letters that Lawrence wrote, the big idea of this short volume is that at any moment and in any circumstance, we can seek and find God and practice His presence in our lives. The free download is at:

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/lawrence/practice>.

Developed by Matt Boda