

I am continuing in a series of topical messages that burned in my mind as I contemplated the New Year. How should we live? What should we be thinking about? All these questions are important. They are self-assessing. If we do not take time to consider where we are and where we want to go, we will simply stumble around in life and never really accomplish anything. Biblically speaking, the most important self-assessment we can do is that which assesses whether or not we really have a relationship with God. What does it mean to be a Christian? Jesus Himself is very concerned with this. His message, you will remember is a message of, repentance. God's Kingdom was at hand. Some of the most plain spoken statements that Jesus makes on this topic are found in the Apostle John's writing. Jesus says to Nicodemus, "you must be born again." He says again just a few chapters after the record of Nicodemus, "an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement." (John 5:28b-29 ESV) We conclude Gospel of John with the statement from John that the book was written that those who read it would believe in Jesus Christ and have life. So if the intent of John is that the testimony of the teaching and life of Jesus could produce belief, then the implication is that the people that were receiving the book did not have life. They were not believers. They would be raised up to judgment. So, are you a Christian or not? How do we know? Well, John writes his epistle that we may know if we are Christians or not, and specifically, that Christians would be able to assess their life in Christ and rest in that knowledge. **1 John 5: 13.**

(I.) First John highlights the relationship between **fellowship** with God and **living in light**. I am considering **verses 5-6** here. Notice the phrases and definition of phrases. **First**, God is light. What does that mean? It means, according to John that in God there is no darkness. Darkness is understood by John as sin, as we can see in the context of our section, and the greater context of the passage. Those that do not walk in the light, or the other word John uses to describe light, "truth," are walking in sin. Sin and darkness are the same. So, **I know I am not a Christian if I believe the God of the Bible to be evil.** Here is an example. I cannot believe in a God that will send people to hell. Have you ever heard that statement? It assumes that we are capable enough to make a moral assessment of the state of a person, and determine that God is evil for doing that. The conclusion of that thinking: God is evil, so I can't believe that God exists. The problem, beyond our inability to assess the state of the soul of every person, is that Jesus says that the people that God sends to hell are people that are not only evil, but that they don't want God in the first place because they enjoy their sin too much. We see this in John's gospel. "**¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.**" (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Jn 3:19-21). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.) We see this in John's epistle when we trace the idea off walking in light or darkness, or in loving the world or the thing is of the world. I know I am not a Christian if I don't care about my sin, and assign evil to God when God's word calls those sins out in my life. Light and darkness cannot commune together. That's the point John is making. A life of sin, and a life with God are mutually exclusive. God is light. He is sinless. He can not abide in His presence anything that has sin. He is, as other texts describe, holy. What does your life pattern say about your relationship with God?

The concept of fellowship is developed more in the next two verses. **(II.) Fellowship with God's people. Verse 7 and 8.** Notice how John lays this out for us. Being a Christian, that is walking in the light, means I have fellowship with God's people. John connects this theme of interaction with God's people throughout his epistle. **4:7-8** makes it very clear that if we do not love one another, we do not love God. **What does love mean?** Well, thankfully we have a lot about love in the Bible. John underscores the most brilliant love of all, the love of Christ propitiating for our sins. In other words, the cleansing of our sin by Christ's blood is a statement heartening back to the cross, and a statement about the affect of true love. It is constant. It covers. This is really an encouragement to believers in this sense. If I can use this language, no one has the power to erase the propitious work of the blood of Christ on their life. Part of being a Christian is being payed for, or as we tell people when we are paying their bill, ***I've got you covered.*** We can't pay what God has payed on our behalf. Oh dear Christian you can rest. There is nothing to pay in order to enter heaven. Now all that you do in following God and displaying love to others is a means of reflecting the love of God, not earning it. Are you reflecting the love of God through sacrificial love towards other people, especially those

whom God loves? I know I am not a Christian if I hate Christians and the fellowship of other Christians. Now that doesn't mean I may not struggle with affection. But the true Christian will acknowledge that struggle. I would encourage those who think you don't have to go to church to be a Christian to really ask themselves what they are saying. It is a true statement, going to church doesn't make me a Christian, but in as much as going to church gives me the opportunity to fellowship with, love, and identify with God's people, a true Christian seeks corporate times of worship. Are you a Christian struggling with the sin of not wanting to fellowship with other Christians, or are you not a Christian, actually? A true Christian seeks to find ways of meeting the needs of other Christians, whether spiritually, or physically, and as God gives opportunity, those who are enemies of Christ as we once were. What does your life pattern and your thinking really tell you?

We can bring clarity to this by considering how a true Christian responds when convicted of sin. **(III.) So how does the Christian in fellowship with God and others respond when in sin?** This is seen in [verse 9-10](#). Well that life pattern of the Christian is to walk in light, truth, that which is not sin. So, when we find that we have sinned, we confess our sins and trust God to forgive us. The Christian lives in the world of confession. In fact, when we are in sin our lives are disjointed, burdensome, or even sickening. Here is David on this. [Psalm 38:2-8 \(ESV\)](#): **“For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me. 3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. 4 For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. 5 My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness, 6 I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all the day I go about mourning. 7 For my sides are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh. 8 I am feeble and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart.”** Dear Christian, if you are in sin right now, turn to Jesus Christ in repentance. You will not be at peace until you do. And if you think you are a Christian but feel no compulsion to repent of things you know that the Bible teaches are wrong, you are not a Christian. The Christian confronts conviction of sin with confession towards God. We repent and seek to overcome those sins that entangle us by pressing on in our walk with God and His people.

My friends, are you really trusting in Jesus Christ for your salvation. If you are a Christian hearing this message, you should rejoice in knowing that your Christianity means that you have the right relationship with God, one of fellowship and love. I believe that is one of the messages of the sacrificial system of the O.T. and the institution of the Lord's Table in the N.T., fellowship with God always surrounds feasting, which by the way is never done alone. The Lord's Table, the O.T. sacrifices, always demanded the fellowship of others who are rejoicing in God's salvation. And this message is for those who think they are Christians and are not. Look at your life. What does it say about your relationship with God? If it says you are not a Christian, repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand. Put your belief in Jesus Christ who is the only way to God.

Amen.