

# Study Guide



## 1 John 3:4-10 "The Nature of Sin" October 16, 2016

### Welcome (40 Minutes)

Be intentional to have authentic relationships...

### Worship (5 Minutes)

As the group transitions from of a time of fellowship to a time of intentional study of the word, it is important to facilitate that transition with a time of worship. This can look like praying together, singing songs together, or rejoicing in what the Lord has done throughout the week.

### Word (45 Minutes)

In 1 John 3:4-10, John shifts his focus from that hope associated with Christ's return (3:2-3), to the righteousness which Jesus established when he appeared in the flesh in his messianic mission. Many have read these verses as though John were teaching us about the possibility of victory over all sin in the context of the believer's life.

For more in depth study check out the following pages...

## Walk Prayer & Missions

October 12-22—South Sudan  
December 18-28—South Sudan  
For further information visit  
[norrisferrychurch.org](http://norrisferrychurch.org)

## Calendar

October 30th—Trunk or Treat  
November 13th— Orphan Sunday  
November 13th— Member's Meeting

## Reminder

During our 10:30am service: Kids 1st-3rd will worship with their parents at the beginning of service and will then be dismissed. We will also have another service available in the Annex with live music and video of the sermon.

## Welcome (40 Minutes)

As you fellowship with one another, please be intentional about sharing what the Lord is doing in your lives. Get to know one another and encourage one another. Are your conversations pointing one another toward Jesus?

## Worship (5 Minutes)

If you are looking for a song to sing this week, here are the lyrics to "[Blessed Assurance](#)":

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine  
O what a foretaste of glory divine  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood

Perfect submission, all is at rest  
I in my Savior am happy and blessed  
Watching and waiting, looking above  
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love

This is my story, this is my song  
Praising my Savior all the day long

This is my story, this is my song  
Praising my Savior all the day long

Oh what a Savior, wonderful Jesus

Death could not hold You, You are victorious  
Praise to the risen King

Death could not hold You, You are victorious  
Praise to the risen King

Oh what a Savior, wonderful Jesus  
Oh what a Savior

Wonderful Savior

### Introduction

In 1 John 3:4-10, John shifts his focus from that hope associated with Christ's return (3:2-3), to the righteousness which Jesus established when he appeared in the flesh in his messianic mission. Many have read these verses as though John were teaching us about the possibility of victory over all sin in the context of the believer's life. Many saw in these verses an exhortation to move beyond defeat to a state of perfection, because in Christ, sin's power over us is broken. But John is not talking about the question of whether or not a believer can rise above sin, because John has been quite plain about this: **if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense (2:1)**. Rather John is drawing a contrast between the conduct of those who walk in the light and those who walk in darkness. **John's point is those who walk in the light are not characterized by sinful behavior**. They still sin, but sin is a contradiction of who they are in Christ. Sin is not their characteristic, as it is of those who walk in darkness.

### The Nature of Sin (3:4-6)

The epistle of 1 John is marked by contrasts. John first presents the child of God who purifies himself (3:3), and then describes the person who continues to live in sin and practices lawlessness. The child of God, therefore, cannot continue in sin; and the unbeliever who indulges in sin cannot be a child of God.

In verse 4, John gives us a definition of sin. It is the breaking of a standard, that is, the law of God as given to us in scripture. Anyone can detect a crooked line when a perfectly straight line is drawn next to it. John makes sinful behavior more easily noticed by contrasting it with righteousness.

John explains what sin means by stating that committing sin is the same as a complete disregard for God's law. For him, sin and lawlessness are two interchangeable terms. John actually provides a brief definition of sin by revealing its very nature: "sin is lawlessness." **Sin is a deliberate rejection of God's standards and a resort to one's own desires**. Sin has its origin in the devil and expresses itself as a willful act against God. The person who continues to do what is sinful, "is of the devil (3:8)."

At times John does not clearly distinguish between the first coming of Christ and his return. However, in verse 5, John alludes to the earthly ministry of Jesus and reminds his readers of the essence of the gospel, "**Christ takes away sins.**"

The Old Testament prophets prophesied that the Messiah would come to remove the sins of his people (Isaiah 53). In the New Testament the apostles teach this same doctrine as an accomplished fact (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24). They teach that Christ takes away sins (plural) once for all because Christ himself is sinless (vs. 5). John implies that as the Son of God is sinless, likewise believers, whose sins Christ has taken away, should not yield to sin.

One of the characteristics of being a child of God is to be free from the rule of sin. Should the believer live a life of sin, his claim of being a child of God would be meaningless and a lie.

Once again John presents a contrast (vs. 6). He places the believer, who has ended a life of sin because he is now in Christ, over the unbeliever who, living in sin, has not seen or known Christ.

John begins with a description of the believer as a person who abides (lives) in Christ, fellowships with him, and obeys the scriptures. **John is fully aware that the believer still sins, and that if he confesses his sin, Christ forgives and cleanses him from all unrighteousness (1:9).** John also knows that the believer is no longer in bondage to sin, for his life is controlled by Christ (Gal. 2:20).

What a difference we see when we compare the life of the believer with that of the unbeliever! The unbeliever continues in sin and demonstrates that he has no fellowship with Christ. John declares that the person who persists in sin has neither seen nor known Christ. Anyone, then, who enjoys sin has no faith in Christ and does not know him and therefore, is an unbeliever who walks in darkness.

## Born of God (3:7-10)

In this section of verses, John resorts to parallelism and repetition. While verse 7 opens the section positively, verse 10 concludes it negatively.

In verse 7, John speaks to his readers tenderly as “little children.” He wants them to know the difference between truth and falsehood, that is, between the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of the devil. He realizes the destructive influence of teachers who seek to lead God's children astray, and to alert church members to the lie that belief in God and a sinful life are compatible. John exposes this lie and warns his readers to watch out for these false teachers.

John asks his readers to apply the standard of truth by which they are able to detect deception. He uses as his standard: “the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.” The person who is born of God reflects his spiritual descent. Because of his spiritual rebirth, the believer wants to express his gratitude to God and do that which is right. **Moreover, because righteous living originates in a righteous heart, the believer shows by his conduct that he is one of God's children.**

The first part of verse 8 parallels verse 4, “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness.” The one who continues to do what is sinful “is of the devil.” All sin originates with Satan, “for he has sinned from the beginning.” How do we understand the phrase, “from the beginning?” Some biblical scholars have ascribed the meaning to be from the time when the devil is the devil. How long Satan remained in his pristine angelic state, we do not know. When he fell into sin, he became the originator and instigator of sin. He enticed Adam and Eve and through them put the whole human race into the bondage of sin. As “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) he governs the man who lives in sin.

Verse 9 parallels the first part of verse 6. It is a broader statement in which the emphasis falls on two items: 1. no one who is born of God 2. practices sin; and it introduces the phrase “because His (God's) seed abides in him” a link between the two.

The phrase “born of God” is characteristic of John, for he uses it repeatedly. It signifies that a person has been born spiritually in the past and continues in the present as God's child. Whereas the person who practices sin has Satan as his father, the born again believer knows that God is his Father.

The word “seed” in the phrase “His seed abides in him,” has a figurative connotation: “God's nature” or “God's principle of life.” **God guards the new life he planted in the heart of the believer and causes it to develop.** The believer, then, will not and cannot yield to sin continually because of that divine principle in his heart.

In this entire letter John presents our existence in terms of two categories: you are either a child of God or you are a child of the devil. John sees only absolutes: light or darkness, truth or the lie, God or the devil, life or death. For him there is no middle ground. There are no alternatives.

How do we know to which category we belong? In verse 10, **John says that the proof is in our conduct.** The child of God does what is right and loves his brother, but the child of the devil fails to do these things. The child of the devil, as John puts it, continues to commit sin because he belongs to the evil one. By contrast, the child of God will not continue to sin because he has God's nature in him. He wants to do what is right and thus he demonstrates his love to God and man. Born of God, the believer seeks to reflect his Father's virtues and excellence. When he falls into sin, he realizes that Satan has led him astray. But when he turns to God in faith and repentance, he finds forgiveness. As a child of God he is never in the power of the evil one.

## Sermon Questions

## What does it Say?

1. In verse 4 how does John define sin?
2. In verse 5 what does John point out about Jesus in regard to sin?
3. In verse 6 what does John say about the person who abides (remains) in Jesus? Also what does he say about those who keep on sinning? What is their relationship with Jesus?
4. According to verse 7 who can be considered righteous?
5. In verse 8 what does John say is the source of sinning?
6. What reason does John give for Jesus coming to earth in verse 8?
7. What does John say about those who are born of God in verse 9?
8. How does John say we can distinguish those who are children of God versus those who are children of the devil?

## Sermon Questions

## What Does it Mean?

1. John defines sin as lawlessness in verse 8. What words does our contemporary society use to describe sinful actions? What are some things that are implied about sin by using the definition of lawlessness?
2. Why is it important that Jesus both came to take away sins and that there was no sin in him (vs. 5)? Look at John 1:29 and Hebrews 4:15-16?
3. Why is it not possible for the person who abides (remains) in Jesus to keep on making a practice of sinning?
4. John implies in verse 7 that there were people who were trying to deceive the believers about righteousness. Looking at the way verse 7 is worded, what do you think the deceivers were saying about righteousness?
5. What does it mean to practice righteousness? Does it simply mean to avoid being lawless or is it something more positive than that?
6. What does John say is the source of sinning in verse 8? What does he say about the person who continues to make a practice of sinning?
7. In verse 9 John says that the one who has been born of God cannot keep on making a practice of sinning because "God's seed abides in him". What does it mean to be "born of God" and what do you think is the meaning of the phrase "God's seed abides in him"? Look at John 3:1-8 to help answer this question.
8. So, how does John say we can tell the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil (vs. 10)?

## Sermon Questions

## How Does it Apply?

Are you practicing righteousness or practicing sinning? Practicing implies conscious repetition of a certain kind of behavior. How can you go about practicing righteousness? What will be the result of practicing righteous? What kind of righteous behaviors are you personally trying to practice? Be prepared to share with your group some righteous behaviors you want to practice on or that you are practicing on.

## Walk (30 minutes)

After enjoying fellowship, worship, and time in God's word together, it is now time to pray together as a group and encourage one another in the faith. It is very easy for this portion of the group time to be consumed by the other portions. However, this segment of the group time is crucially important. It answers the question, how do we apply what we are learning in 1 John to our lives today?

Many groups have found that it is helpful to sometimes break up into a men's group and a women's group for the purpose of being able to be more transparent and honest as we encourage one another and keep one another accountable. I encourage you to try this in your groups.

In addition to praying for, and encouraging, one another, this portion of the group time should also be used for planning how your group can participate in God's work outside the walls of our church – "neighbors and nations." Discuss with your group some ideas on how you can be intentional with building relationships with your neighbors and co-workers. What can your Community Group do to impact the area around you?

May the Lord bless and encourage you as you lead your groups! Know that we are praying for you on a weekly basis and that we are here to help you in any way that we can!

## Model Answers

### What does it say?

1. In verse 4 John defines sin as lawlessness.
2. He points out that Jesus came to the Earth to take away sins and that there was no sin in him.
3. The person who abides in Jesus cannot keep on making a practice of sinning. John says that the person who keeps on sinning does not know Jesus and has not seen him. These people do not have a personal relationship with Jesus. They do not know him.
4. The person who "practices righteousness" can be considered righteous.
5. According to John in verse 8 the devil is the source of sinning.
6. Jesus came to earth to destroy the works of the devil. This is in synch with what verse 5 says—that Jesus came to take away sins from the world.
7. John says in verse 9 that those who are born of God do not make a practice of sinning.
8. John says we can distinguish those who are children of God by whether they are practicing righteousness.

### What does it mean?

1. Some words that our contemporary society use to describe sinful actions are: mistakes, poor judgment, consequences of an inadequate upbringing, preconditioned to these actions because of the neighborhood they grew up in, natural consequence of a poor family life. Lawlessness implies deliberately breaking the law of God and/or the law of your conscience.
2. Jesus could not have taken away the sins of the world if he were not the perfect Lamb of God—a sinless sacrifice.
3. This is not possible because Jesus is sinless and he has come to take away the sins of the world. If we are abiding in him and taking our strength and life from him as described in John 15, we cannot continue to keep on making a practice of sinning.
4. It may be that the deceivers were saying that a person could be righteous without practicing righteousness.
5. It means to do righteous deeds on a regular basis—over and over again—to develop righteous habits and develop a righteous life-style. It does not just mean to avoid committing sins but it also includes doing deeds of righteousness like helping and loving others (vs.10).
6. John says that the devil is the source of sin, and those who are continuing to practice sinning are children of the devil.
7. Being born of God means being “born again” as John describes in John 3:1-8. It means that God makes a radical change in a person’s heart when he is born again. The phrase “God’s seed abides in him” probably means the life of God (eternal life) is living in him through the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is a reality for true believers in Jesus.
8. John summarizes in verse 10 that practicing righteousness is one way that a person can be recognized as a child of God. Also not practicing righteousness is a way to recognize that a person is a child of the devil.