

Back to Basics

God Is Light

1 John 1:5

Introduction

Many physicists are either atheists or agnostics. The reasons are not that difficult to understand. Famous physicists like Stephen Hawking have declared that science, and physics in particular, can explain everything about how this universe was created and functions based on the concept of God is not necessary. God does not fit into their explanation because they say the existence of God cannot be proved based on the laws of physics. They feel God is only a crutch for people who do not understand theories of physics.

However, if you consider the possibility that the existence of God is not only consistent with the laws of physics but that an electromagnetic (em) field could very possibly be a manifestation of God, then the whole argument changes. The physicists may have already embraced the existence of God without even realizing it. Their explanations just use different descriptions and technical terms to describe the revelation of God's miraculous works.

The association of light with God is not a new concept at all from a religious and spiritual point of view. The statement "God is light" is a recurring theme in the Bible. Genesis records, "God said 'let there be light,' and then there was Light." Several places in scripture indicate that God is indeed light or manifests Light.

You don't have to be a physicist to understand the difference between darkness and Light. It is one of the basic truths about God, both metaphorically and materially. The Apostle John wrote this letter of 1 John to Christians who were being attacked by false teachers claiming that the real Jesus was just a human who had been enlightened or energized by "the Christ." They claimed to have this same "Christ spirit," which gave them unique fellowship with God, and that only those who learned their secret knowledge could share in this fellowship.

But John refuted all of this. He insisted that Jesus was God-incarnate; God revealed in human flesh. He also witnessed and heard Jesus' claims to be God. He saw the miracles that substantiated Christ's claims and handled his resurrected body. John also stated that he had fellowship with Jesus and that all who receive Him can share the same kind of fellowship with God that John and the other disciples had.

What does fellowship with God look like, and how can we evaluate a person's claim to have fellowship with God? John begins to clear up this confusion in 1:5-10, "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive

ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

(1 John 1:5-10 NKJV)

John introduces a basic principle of authentic Christian spirituality when he says, "Walk in the Light."

I. God Is Light

John says that God is light. Therefore, fellowship with God requires walking in the Light. Anyone who claims to have fellowship with God but doesn't walk in the Light is either lying or self-deceived. The false teachers may have been saying the same thing, but their definition of "light" was their secret knowledge.

John defines "light" differently; as a way to forge a vital connection between spirituality and morality. He emphasizes that God is absolutely and morally righteous and that his moral instruction for our lives is authoritative. God's command for us to be holy is not a suggestion. God reveals His ethics in the 10 Commandments. God also reveals his moral will to us subjectively through our conscience.

John calls any attitude or action contrary to God's moral will "sin." Sin is really a revolt against God's leadership. It damages our lives and the lives of others because it violates God's design for us.

What does John mean by "walking in the light?" Well, certainly not that God requires living a perfect life. It means that we respond to God by being honest with him about our sins and accepting his remedy for our sins—Jesus' atoning death.

To claim that righteousness is not important, or that sin is only psychological guilt, or that sin doesn't really exist is false spirituality. John calls it "walking in darkness." And the statement that it makes is that you think God is a liar. God says that you do sin and that sin is serious, proving that you are spiritually deceived.

In Chapter 3, verse 4, he writes, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." (1 John 3:4-9 NKJV)

1 John 3 is a call to holiness. Our new nature in Christ is pure and holy. God calls us to live in our daily experience like we are in our new spiritual position.

Of course, there is a mystery here. John says in 1 John 1:8 and 10 that believers cannot attain sinless perfection in their experience. However, we can allow our new nature in Christ to dominate our experience so that we live consistently godly lives. The Apostle Paul calls this the war between the flesh and the spirit in the book of Galatians.

These false teachers were living in sin while claiming they had no sin, didn't sin, or couldn't sin. The false teachers taught that the real "you" is your spirit—and that your spirit is always good and your body is simply the container of the real you. They taught that as long as your spirit receives spiritual knowledge and experiences, it doesn't matter what your body does. Let your body do whatever it wants—including sexual immorality. You can see why this teaching was so popular!

This teaching should sound familiar to you because much of American spirituality is very similar. Americans have largely rejected any real connection between spirituality and morality.

Sociologist Christian Smith published a study of the religious beliefs and practices of American adolescents. Based on interviews with over 3000 randomly selected young people and their parents, Smith discovered that Americans between the ages of 13 and 17 have a simplistic and narcissistic understanding of God.

Their religious and social indoctrination has generated a theology that is highly moralistic in tone and values the therapeutic benefits of happiness, security, and goodness associated with religious adherence. They view God as a divine butler and therapist for humanity, a deity who exists to serve them rather than the gracious and omnipotent God who powerfully created the world.

Christian Smith summarizes Americans' spiritual views as "moralistic, therapeutic deism." Americans prefer a pantheistic spirituality because, as C. S. Lewis observed, it leaves us without moral accountability.

But John is telling us that God is a moral Being—so if we want spiritual reality, we must come to grips with his righteousness and our sin. God is not the cosmic sin police, looking for an excuse to bust you and rub your nose in your guilt.

The truth is God loves you more than you can imagine. His love caused Him to send his Son to die for our sins so we can become part of His family, no matter how much or how badly we have sinned against him. Listen to what he writes in Chapter 2, verse 1, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." (1 John 2:1-2 NKJV)

Do you know that sin is offensive to God? The good news is that the death of Christ appeases God's wrath against us and causes him to be merciful toward us. That's propitiation. It is the action of appeasing God by Christ's atoning sacrifice.

But even though the Great Physician loves us and is competent to heal our sickness, we must be willing to admit we're sick and come to him for healing before he can help us. If we lie and say we're not guilty and haven't sinned, there's nothing He can do to help us. That is why spiritual reality requires confessing your sin to God.

God is Light, and only as we walk into the light will we clearly see the path that leads to eternal life and our destiny in Christ.

II. Walk in the Light

Look at verse 8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (1 John 1:8-10 NKJV)

Some teachers say John is telling us how to become a Christian here; others think John is telling us how to grow as a Christian. Both are true and important. The New Testament truth is we need to apply it in both ways. To establish fellowship with God, you must first humbly admit that you are a guilty sinner before him. Your confession cannot be just mental assent or evasive ("no one is perfect;" "everybody makes mistakes") or merely sociological ("I've let people down").

You agree with God that it's you! You are the one who has rejected His moral instruction and broken His laws. You are the one who is guilty before him and deserving of his judgment. It means personally casting yourself on him for mercy.

Jesus talks about this in Luke 18:9-14, "Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: **"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'** And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, **'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'** I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14 NKJV)

The Pharisee illustrates a self-righteous, prideful response. The tax collector illustrates a humble response (18:13). Note the amazing conclusion, **"for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."** (18:14)!

God justifies you when you humble yourself before Him, and He permanently acquits you of all moral guilt through Jesus' substitutionary death. John says God "forgives your sin and cleanses you of all unrighteousness" through Jesus' blood. No matter how wicked you have been, no matter how great your guilt is—Jesus' death has paid the price in full! And you are forever delivered from God's condemnation. If you want to go home justified, take your place with the tax collector, and call out humbly to God for his mercy—and by God's grace, He will forgive you!

Romans 8:1 says, "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:1 NKJV)

On the other hand, to *grow in* fellowship with God, you must humbly agree with God when he corrects you. God speaks to people who already belong to Christ about how to restore fellowship with Him after we sin. God wants us to live securely in his love. But because God loves you, he will correct you when you turn away from his moral guidance.

Sin takes many forms. It can be taking the wrong action, such as viewing pornography, gossiping or making hurtful comments, lying or boasting, or trying to manipulate circumstances to your favor. It can be wrong inaction, such as selfish laziness or unwillingness to help someone in need, even if you know you should. It may be having a wrong attitude, such as ingratitude, bitterness, or lust. Whatever it is, God will convict you through your conscience.

If you resist the Holy Spirit's correction, you will lose your peace and spiritual closeness with Christ. It doesn't mean God has rejected you, but it does mean that you are now a candidate for His divine judgment. Your fellowship with God suffers because you have rejected his leadership and guidance.

So, what is the path to restoration when this happens? 1 John 1:9 (quote). To confess your sin to God means to agree with Him that what you're doing is wrong, that you are guilty of doing it, and that you are sorry you have done it and sorry for the pain and problem it has caused. To rationalize, blame-shift, minimize, or be flippant is what Adam and Eve did when they sinned in the Garden.

That is not the way of restoration for any relationship, including our relationship with God.

Conclusion

Embracing God's way means agreeing to do what the Holy Spirit shows you to do. Sometimes it means simply thanking him for His forgiveness and moving forward. Sometimes it means making some adjustments and turning away from the situations that tempt you. It could include apologizing to the person you wronged. Perhaps it means telling a Christian friend about your sin for help and accountability.

The Holy Spirit will teach us God's way and help us overcome when we repent of our sins and ask for God's help. Insisting on your own terms for help and forgiveness is not the way of restoration. But if you ask Him, God will cleanse your conscience, restore your peace with him, renew your fellowship with him, and empower you to serve him once again.

Hebrews 9:14 says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" ([Hebrews 9:14](#))

The way of restoration is always open to us! Instead of hiding and posturing, we can be honest about our sins and problems and receive God's love and forgiveness. Verse 7 says, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." ([1 John 1:7](#))

That is what produces close fellowship and spiritual transformation. When you walk in the light there is no need to hide in the darkness.