

THE BIG IDEA: Walking in the light will keep relationships right.

The Take-Off

It's amazing how far people will go to point out another person's problem, isn't it?

On the really sad end, you've got people who will lose tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars in lawsuits when they are clearly wrong, just because they want to make the other person look bad.

Marriages can be a sad example of this, too. (Maybe it's too early in the message to go there, but it is true)

A husband or a wife will draw the line in the sand and then blame everything bad thing that happens on the other one. Culturally, it gives rise to tons of frivolous lawsuits and really silly clothing apparel.

"I'm with stupid" tee shirts have been around for awhile now, but here are two people who have taken it to the next level. (Shirt with 2 arrows - this guy is convinced everyone else is the problem - and tombstone)

My guess is that none of us in here would ever take this issue to the tombstone level, but it is an issue that John was addressing when he wrote the letter that we know as First John, and it's still an issue today because people are still alive and people will always want to deflect problems away from themselves and onto others.

John writes that there is something that can happen in and to each one of us that will bring an end to this "I'm with stupid" mentality.

As we learned last week, it all starts with being loved by Jesus, and when we are, then we begin to love like Jesus. When we love like Jesus, we love each other, and that's what we want to take a look at today.

We're going to spend most of our time in 1 John 1:5-7, so let's read it and then we're going to put on our grammar hats and notice the power that changing one simple word can have on the entire body of Christ.

What we can learn right away from these 3 verses is that light is pretty important.

We've all had some bad experiences in the dark, right? I've put on shorts covered in fire ants in the dark, I've rubbed a dead mouse in the dark, and I've eaten ant-covered donuts in the dark. I'm sure you've had similar experiences.

I know a man who rubbed the wrong woman's leg because his eyes were closed and he was in the dark, and the wrong woman was the Senior Pastor's wife!

Light is critical, and John tells us that. Of all the things that can happen in the dark, fellowship - true Jesus-centered Biblical relationships and unity - isn't one of them.

That kind of relationship only happens in the light, and that statement begs the question that we're going to try and answer today: If being in the light guarantees that we'll have fellowship with each other, then how is it possible to have so many very serious relationship issues in the church? How can we still tick each other off so much if we're walking in the light?

While I can't speak for John while he was writing this letter, I'll say that I think I know the answer and that he thought he knew the answer, too, and it all lies in one simple word.

Let's talk about how one simple preposition has the power to change everything.

1. The wrong preposition: walking with the light
 - a. In verse 7, John wrote clearly that there is a promise for every Christian and every church in general, and for our church specifically, and here it is: if we walk in the light, we will have fellowship with one another
 - b. That's really good news, especially since there are so many times that relationships - especially in the church - seem like anything but fellowship
 - c. But the reason for that is that we take out one preposition and replace it with another, and the one that we often use is wrong
 - d. Instead of walking IN the light, we start walking WITH the light
 - e. Here are the differences that simple change can make:
 - when we walk with the light, we get to be in control
 - when we walk with the light, we decide where it shines and who it shines on
 - when we walk with the light, it opens the door for pride and religious condemnation (Matt. 7:3)
 - f. Want to see that played out in Scripture? Let's look at a passage that we mentioned last week
 - g. In John 8, religious leaders caught a woman in adultery, and because they controlled the light, the following took place:

- the men only brought the woman to Jesus, not the man (they controlled where the light shone)
- when they brought her to Jesus (the Light of the world - John 1:9), He shone the light on the men, too
- whatever Jesus wrote in the dirt called the men out, and they left
- the nature of light is to expose things, and Jesus shines the light on all men
- their response to the light was to run - it exposed them but they didn't let it heal them
- end result was no fellowship, because 1 John 1:7 says fellowship only happens if we have the right preposition

2. The right preposition: walking in the light
 - a. So what happens when we refuse to walk with the light and choose to walk in the light?
 - b. Actually, quite a bit:
 - we give up control because now the light shines on us all equally
 - we become more concerned about being right before God than about being right before men
 - we find ourselves much more qualified to help others deal with their sin (Matthew 7:5)
 - c. What's the biggest payoff to walking in the light instead of with the light? Fellowship.
 - d. One of the things that most of our Community Groups experience over time is a night or two when people just naturally share with everyone else a past or a current struggle.
 - e. The result is always the same: a lot of tears, prayers, and a strengthened bond in the group that can't be broken. That is unbreakable unity that we call one of our CORE FOUR values here.
 - f. 1 John 1:7 says it's a process that you and I can count on: if we'll walk in the light, we WILL have fellowship with one another.
 - g. That's what the BIG IDEA today communicates: **walking in the light will keep relationships right.**
 - h. The key is all about which preposition you're using.

The Landing

Hopefully by now we've all got the same question rolling around in our heads: how do I know which preposition I'm using?

Is there a simple test that can reveal to me if I'm walking with the light or in the light?

I have one question to ask you, and then it's up to you and me to take the time to work through what your answer will reveal.

What have you been thinking during the message? That you need this teaching or that someone else does?

As long as our response to light is to point a finger at anyone other than ourselves, we will be a roomful of believers wearing "I'm with stupid" shirts, and we'll never have the fellowship with each other that John writes about.

And so we must repent and be reconciled, first to God and then to one another.

1 John 1:9 is clear: if we confess our sin - our need to hold the light - to God and he will forgive.

Matthew 5:23-24 is clear: stop worshipping - stop offering to God any service (even a trip to India!) - and be reconciled to one another.

Does it feel risky? Sure. Will we want to check out? Probably. But is it worth it to keep unity and have fellowship with one another? Absolutely!

It's the only way to truly walk in unity.

Walking in the light will keep relationships right.