

**Icebreaker:**

John talks about light and darkness in this passage. Growing up, were you afraid of the dark? How does the Bible, and this passage, speak about light and darkness?

**Read this week's scripture and discuss:**

1. In the first paragraph of this letter, John says our fellowship is with each other, and our fellowship is with God. How do you see the connection between your fellowship with God and your fellowship with others?
2. What helps you to grow in your relationship with God? How are you engaging in practices which help you in that?
3. What helps you to grow in your relationship with others? How are you engaging in practices which help you with others?
4. 1 John 4:20 says, "Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen." Does this passage make you uncomfortable?
5. Eugene Peterson said, "Sin is not breaking a rule, it is breaking a relationship." Is this how you think of sin? Why or why not?
6. What are the dangers of claiming to be without sin? (verses 8-10)
7. Do you struggle with believing God forgives your sins? How does living in community help or hinder your belief in that?

**Prayer:**

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

**prayer requests**

- > Prayers of comfort for Nancy and Ron Baker in the death of Nancy's mother, Carolyn Barnes.

From the ZPC monthly Prayer Calendar [available at [zpc.org/prayer](http://zpc.org/prayer) or at the Welcome Center].

- > Pray for the Fuller Center for Housing to assist families locally and globally who need homes. May they find volunteers and generous resources.
- > Pray for Steve and Kay Wright's trip to Brazil (May 3-14) as they visit Good Jesus new church development in Florianopolis and travel to Apucarana to begin plans for a new Great Banquet Community.

When we read the apostle Paul or other New Testament writers say "you" we often think of it as an individual you. Paul and others most often mean it as a plural you – like "you all." Our faith is to be lived out in relationship, in fellowship. We are encouraged by John in this letter to grow in our fellowship with God AND with others. May we learn more even this week about growing closer to God and more in relationship with each other.

1. As we grow closer to God, we should care more about his people. Jesus said the greatest commandment is the love God with all your heart, soul and might, AND to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are called to love God and to love others.
2. Practices might begin with studying the Bible and prayer. It can be expanded to other practices as well. These practices should include others, like hospitality, celebration, service and accountability – with others who are on the journey like us – and with those who are not like us.
3. We can practice things like hospitality by inviting others to join us. We can practice serving and compassion here in ministries at ZPC. We can engage in celebration in church or community activities. We can practice prayer, study and accountability in places like Home Groups, Great Banquet and missions.
4. When John says we might be liars, that can make us uncomfortable. When we can be called liars for loving God, but not loving others, that makes us uncomfortable. We can care for others in practical ways, even where uncomfortable, which shows love.
5. For most of us, sinning is breaking a rule: Do not lie, do not steal, do not covet. But telling lies, stealing, gossip – hurts others and hurts relationships. These sins hurt people, not just break rules.
6. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and call God a liar! This is dangerous. But John adds, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and forgives us and purifies us – that is Good News!
7. Many of us do struggle with believing God forgives us. We struggle with our own self-worth and often are our own worst critics. Being in unhealthy relationships might lead to more sin or wrong thinking. Being in healthy relationships can help us to be accountable to others, to help each other, and to be reminded by other Christians that we are truly forgiven even when we don't deserve it.