

1 John 1:6 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
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Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			

From Talk Thru the Bible

1 John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [Ean eipomen](#) (1PAAS) [oti koinonian echomen](#) (1PPAI) [met' autou kai en to skotei peripatomen](#) (1PPAS) [pseudometha](#) (1PPM/PI) [kai ou poioumen](#) (1PPAI) [ten aletheian](#):

Amplified: [So] if we say we are partakers together and enjoy fellowship with Him when we live and move and are walking about in darkness, we are [both] speaking falsely and do not live and practice the Truth [which the Gospel presents]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

ESV: If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ([ESVBible.org](#))

KJV: If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

NLT: So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Consequently, if we were to say that we enjoyed fellowship with him and still went on living in darkness, we should be both telling and living a lie. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: If we say that things in common we are having with Him, and thus fellowship, and in the sphere of the aforementioned darkness are habitually ordering our behavior, we are lying, and we are not doing the truth.

Young's Literal: if we may say -- 'we have fellowship with Him,' and in the darkness may walk -- we lie, and do not the truth

IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM AND YET WALK IN THE DARKNESS: Ean eipomen (1PAAS) oti koinonian echomen (1PPAI) met' autou kai en to skotei peripatomen, (1PPAS):

- **If:** 1Jn 1:8,10 2:4 4:20 Mt 7:22 Jas 2:14,16,18 Rev 3:17,18
- **fellowship:** 1Jn 1:3 Ps 5:4-6 94:20 2Co 6:14-16
- **walk:** 1Jn 2:9-11 Ps 82:5 Pr 2:13 4:18,19 Jn 3:19,20 11:10 12:35,46
- [1 John 1 Resources](#)

A WATERSHED PASSAGE

The interpretation of 1John 1:6 marks a "watershed" (Webster = "*a crucial dividing point, line, or factor*") among commentators and commentaries. The division is between those who feel that what John is saying does not relate to tests of one's salvation but relates to "tests" of fellowship in the sense of one's daily communion with God. In other words the first group says that John is not describing criteria by which one can discriminate between **professors** of Christ and **possessors** of Christ, those who really do know Him and are truly born again and thus can be assured of their salvation (1Jn 5:13).

The second, far more common (and older) interpretative position is that John is describing the difference in behavior of those who claim to be Christians (what they say) and those who are genuine followers of Christ (how they live). **The reader should understand that these notes favor the latter interpretation as the most accurate.** However, keep in mind that while Scripture can have only one true **interpretation**, it can have many valid **applications** and that is the approach taken by these notes.

Gary Derickson aptly summarizes the interpretative position held by the majority of scholars...

According to this view John's purpose in writing the epistle was to encourage his readers, who were understood to be believers, to assure themselves of their salvation by verifying the validity of their profession through tests of spiritual life. These tests include doctrinal agreement with the apostles' teaching and submission to their standard of conduct, namely, loving the brethren and living righteously. Eternal life, understood as a soteriological (salvation) term, is the subject of the epistle, with Christian certainty (assurance of salvation) serving as the dominant theme throughout the work. Salvation is the subject of the epistle's prologue in its focus on the **"Word of Life"** and the apostolic proclamation of **"eternal life"** (1Jn 1:1-2). With **eternal life** as its central subject, the epistle develops three tests by which members of the believing community can recognize that they do indeed possess that life.

These three tests of the Christian life are belief (truth), righteousness (obedience), and love. These indicate whether a person has **eternal life**, and is therefore in communion with God, or does not and is merely professing faith. Passing these tests produces **assurance of salvation**, since there is a correlation between possession of life and production of fruit as evidence of eternal life. **John's purpose was not to cause his readers to doubt their salvation, but to find assurance in it.** Fruit can be used either to reveal the absence of eternal life in an individual or to assure him of the presence of that life. ([Reference](#))

In summary, these notes are written with a prayerful attitude and dependence on the Holy Spirit that the Word of Truth in First John might be rightly divided and accurately interpreted (2Ti 2:15-note). The reader is strongly encouraged to assume a "Berean-like" mindset, and to read John's inspired epistle with great eagerness, continually observing the Scriptures daily "to see whether the things" written in these notes are indeed an accurate reflection of John's original intent! (See Acts 17:11-note)

TWO INTERPRETATIVE VIEWS OF FIRST JOHN

TESTS OF SALVATION	TESTS OF FELLOWSHIP
Are you truly... Regenerated, born again, justified?	Are you being progressively sanctified?
JUSTIFICATION	SANCTIFICATION

The writers in this group believe John's purpose is summarized in 1John 5:13 = He desires for his readers to have assurance of their salvation by comparing what they say with how they actually live.	The writers in this group believe John's purpose is summarized in 1John 1:3 = He desires that his readers to have ongoing, intimate communion with God and one another.
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G Campbell Morgan, the respected expositor of yesteryear made the following astute observation regarding John's Gospel and his first epistle...

A comparison of John 20:31 and 1John 5:13 will show the Gospel and the epistle to be complementary. The Gospel was written that men might have life, the epistle that believers might know they had life. In the former we have Divine life as revealed in Christ; in the latter the same life as realized in the Christian. The Gospel declares the way of life through the incarnate Son; the epistle unfolds the nature of that life as possessed by the children of God.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OBSERVING THE TEXT REPEATEDLY IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Remember that in order to most accurately interpret any portion of Scripture, one needs to repeatedly read (prayerfully and carefully with meticulous observation) the surrounding text in order to assure that the **context** (and the author's flow of thought) is clearly grasped. Otherwise, one is in danger of interpreting the passage erroneously. Those writers who favor John's purpose is to give the believing readers a series of tests by which they can evaluate their fellowship invoke 1John 1:3 to support that premise. Those who favor John's purpose is to give several tests of one's salvation refer to his purpose statement in 1John 5:13. Let's look at a some of the verses in the context of this letter. As you read these passages, ask God's Spirit to help you determine, does what this passage is describing relate to a sense of communion with God or to an assurance of salvation...

The one who **says**, "I have come to know Him," and **does** not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1Jn 2:3)

The one who **says** he is in the light and yet **hates** his brother is in the darkness until now. (1Jn 2:9)

If someone **says**, "I love God," and **hates** his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. (1Jn 4:20)

Do you notice a pattern? John repeatedly associates what one **says** with what one **does** or how one behaves. As discussed more fully below, John links one's profession with his or her practice. John certainly seems to want to make sure we are who we say we are, as determined by how we live. Now, does that sound like John wants his readers to be sure of their fellowship (1Jn 1:3) or their salvation (1Jn 5:13)? How do you know what a person really believes? James would say the way to know is by their "works." John the Baptist and Jesus would say the way to know is by their "fruits." So if one's "works" or "fruits" include not keeping God's commandments and hating one's brother, does that sound like a believer who is just "out of fellowship" with God or does it sound like one who professes to believe but has no evidence of the new birth that would give him an assurance of eternal life?

A SUGGESTION

Before you read more of these notes, let me strongly suggest that you read through the relatively short letter of First John several times. This exercise of repeated, purposeful, prayerful observation with the enablement of Your Teacher, the Holy Spirit will give you a good sense of John's flow of thought and his purpose for writing this great letter.

To help you accomplish this objective I would suggest downloading the free [Overview Lesson on First John](#) which is lesson 1 of the 11 week Precept study.

The [Overview Lesson](#) will guide you through the book 3 times, each time **observing** the text with a different objective - e.g., one of the suggested exercises you will instruct you mark the **key words** (and don't forget the frequent contrasts - light/dark, love/hate, etc.) [The Overview Lesson](#) includes a printable copy of the entire epistle of First John (NAS95), double spaced and with wide margins. I would encourage you to print out a copy and use it as your "worksheet" for observing, **marking** and making notes of your **observations** in the margins. After you have performed your own **inductive study** of First John, you can will be better prepared to read these commentary notes or other commentaries (or sermons) and you will be able discern whether comment represent an accurate interpretation of John's letter and especially his overall purpose for writing.

As alluded to earlier a minority of commentaries such as those by David Guzik feel that John's subject is "fellowship, not salvation." Guzik then goes on to state that "*The Christian who temporarily walks in darkness is still saved, but not in fellowship with God.*" (Bolding mine for emphasis) While I have great respect for Guzik's commentary, his statement "*temporarily walks*" cannot be substantiated from the verb tense John uses for "*walk*". To the contrary, John's use of the **present tense** pictures this walk as

continual pattern of behavior and not just a "temporary slip" (this latter occurring in every believer's life). In fact Guzik himself goes on to make another comment (with which I completely agree) on 1John 1:6 observing that "*a walk in darkness* (indicates) *a pattern of living*. *This does not speak of an occasional lapse, but of a lifestyle of darkness.*" (Bolding mine) Webster says that the word "**pattern**" is a "*a reliable sample of traits, acts, tendencies, or other observable characteristics of a person*!" Beloved, how can a person exhibiting a "**pattern of living**" of continually walking in darkness be considered to be a child of the light (Eph 5:8-note where "walk" is in the present tense! Cp Jn 12:36)? How can one who continually behaves in a sinful, ungodly manner expect to have the assurance of salvation which John desires for his readers (1John 5:13)? As we will discuss in more detail below, an important observation to make is that John repeatedly and purposefully associates **what one says** with **how one lives**. John wants his readers to know who they really are in the spiritual realm (either in Christ or still in Adam - 1Cor 15:22), by how they conduct themselves in the physical realm.

Sam Storms ([1John Sermon Comments](#)) comments on the interpretative approach of writers such as Guzik (see above)

According to one perspective on this passage, the contrasts here are between two types of Christians: those who are "in" fellowship with God and those who are "out" of fellowship with Him. Thus, John is instructing the believer not to hide his/her sins (1Jn 1:6) or deny them (1Jn 1:8,10), but to expose oneself to the light (1Jn 1:7) and to confess one's sins (1Jn 1:9). Thus with one's sins confessed and forgiven, one maintains temporal fellowship with God. My understanding, however, is that John is making his initial application of the Moral Test. He first describes characteristics of the false teachers in order to expose them as unbelievers and then describes the genuine believer in order to confirm his faith and assure him of eternal life...

The basis of the moral test is the character of God himself: "**God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all**" (1Jn 1:5-note). Marshall points out that John

is fond of emphasizing his propositions by a restatement of them in negative form, and so he at once adds, 'in him there is no darkness at all' (I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, The New International Commentary on the NT: Eerdmans, 1978).

What does it mean to say that "God is light"? See Ps 27:1; 36:9; Isa 49:6. It may refer to His *ineffable radiance and splendor* or His *self-revelation of truth* or His *holiness and righteousness* or perhaps all combined! Given the context of the argument in 1 John, the emphasis would be on His **absolute and unwavering truthfulness in both word and deed as well as His transcendent holiness and immeasurable purity**. (Bolding mine) Says **Stott**:

The miserable errors of the heretics were due to their ignorance of God's ethical self-revelation as Light... And if God is also light in the sense of possessing an absolute moral perfection, their claim to know Him and have fellowship with Him despite their indifference to morality is seen to be sheer non-sense, as the author goes on to demonstrate. (John R. W. Stott: *The Letters of John*: Eerdmans, 1964)

Smalley concurs

The statement 'God is light' carries with it an inevitable moral challenge: 'his followers must walk in the light' (Word Biblical Commentary)

John Piper adds that

When you **walk in darkness**, you are controlled by the desires for the soft, warm underbellies of prestige and power and two-second pleasures (see Jas 4:14). This is the very opposite of what it means to have fellowship with God. Fellowship with God means that you see things the way He sees them and have the same desires He has. If we are controlled by desires for the world instead of desires for God, it doesn't matter whether we say we have fellowship with God or not; we don't have it. Instead we walk in darkness. ([1 John 1:5-10: Let Us Walk in the Light of God](#))

The IVP Bible Commentary puts it like this

Light and darkness are opposites, and repel each other. One cannot have fellowship with God with one foot in darkness and one in light, since God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. Darkness and light are two opposing forces, each making their competing claims upon us.

As we study 1John 1:6-10, seeking to rightly divide the Word of Truth, we do well to keep in mind John's foundational truths in 1John 1:1-5, especially the truth that...

God is light
In Him there is no darkness at all!

Daniel Wallace comments that...

After establishing Who God is, John turns to us and how we relate to God. John will not permit us to rationalize about our sin. To be in God's **light** means to be exposed to the truth about himself and ourselves. Yet, there is a pernicious problem we face. In 1John 1:6-10, John mimics three errant views that his opponents held and then shows how they miss the mark. All have to do with the depravity of men; all have to do with hiding from the light.

First let us recall the context that John has just presented the truth that **Jesus is the "Word of Life", the "Eternal Life" and that "God is light."** John adds that **"In Him there is no darkness at all."** In other words John is stating as strongly as he can, the contrast between God ("Light") and darkness. Note that John does not speak about the origin of the darkness. That is not his point. His main thrust is to emphasize that living in the darkness is absolutely incompatible with fellowship with God. John is using light and darkness primarily in the ethical sense. In other words, he is saying that *"God is good and evil can have no place beside Him"* (Howard Marshall)

Remember why John is writing...

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life (1Jn 5:13)

To whom is John writing? Clearly this letter is addressed to believers, not to unbelievers (cp the "identity" of those addressed in 1Jn 2:1, 2:12, 13, 14).

What is John's main purpose for writing? This verse is a clear statement of his purpose. John wants his believing readers to be sure of their salvation (Compare 1Jn 2:3ff, 21).

In a day when up to 85% of Americans claim to be Christians and up to 45% profess that they are "born again" ([Barna Survey, 2006](#)), one can see how the truth of this John's ancient epistle is very timely and applicable to our present age!

THE TRUTH ABOUT... SAYING ONE THING & DOING ANOTHER!

If we say - This is the first of six clauses introduced by "if" in 1Jn 1:5-1Jn 2:6 - 1 John 1:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 2:1, 3.

SUMMARY OF JOHN'S "IF" STATEMENTS		
	NEGATIVE (False)	POSITIVE (True)
1	1Jn 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness	1Jn 1:7 but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light
2	1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have no sin	1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins
3	1Jn 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned	1Jn 2:1 And if anyone sins
There are other "if" statements but these constitute the first and major group.		

Note the 3 false claims (professions) that...

- (1) They had an intimacy with God (regardless of their behavior)
- (2) They had no stain of sin or no sin nature
- (3) They had done no wrong

Note: Only 1John 1:6 will be discussed on this page. Notice however that the negative and positive points in essence deal with some aspect of sin (even though #1 does not use the specific word, walking in darkness is tantamount to sin.)

If ([1437](#)) (**ean**) is a preposition which serves to identify what is referred to in Greek as a third class conditional clause. It means "(If ... and it may be true or may not be true." There is a supposition (something that is supposed) where the reality of the issue is uncertain. A conditional clause in Greek is formed by combining a preposition with a certain verb mood. In this case **ean** is combined with the **subjunctive mood** which is the mood of probability ("**we say**" is in the subjunctive mood) which implies uncertainty. In the context of this letter, it is reasonable to consider that there were false teachers among the believers who were making these claims. **Marshall** adds that *"It is probable that these claims were real statements made by people in the church to*

which John was writing, and that they reflect the outlook of the people who were causing trouble in the church."

In First John 1:6, the **"we"** is saying that it is possible to have continual fellowship with God and continually live in the darkness of sin! Quite a claim in light of the fact that **God is light** and in Him there is absolutely no darkness at all!

WHO IS "WE"?

We say (2036)(epo) is the first person plural which indicates that John is including himself in this suppositional statement. Some would take this as evidence that what follows does not apply to the distinction of believers versus unbelievers. There is however another way to explain John's use of **"we"** which is very compatible with the context.

Alfred Plummer writes that...

With great gentleness (John) puts the case hypothetically, and with great delicacy he includes himself in the hypothesis. This *if we'* continues in almost every verse until 1Jn 2:3, after which it is changed into the equivalent *he that'*, which continues down to 1Jn 2:11; after that neither form is used. (**Ed:** That's not exactly true - see *"if someone says"* in 1Jn 4:20).

Henry Alford explains that...

The first person plural ("we") gives to the sayings a more general form, precluding any from escaping from the inference: at the same time that by including himself in the hypothesis, the Apostle descends to the level of his readers, thus giving to his exhortations the **"come,"** and not **"go,"** which ever (always) wins men's hearts the most. ([1 John 1 Commentary](#)) (Bolding added for emphasis)

Sam Storms addresses the **"we"** question...

In 1Jn 1:1-1Jn 1:5 John uses **"we"** 13x. In 1Jn 1:6-10 **"we"** is used 12x. The **"we"** of vv. 1-5 refers to the apostles (1Jn 1:1). But whom does the **"we"** of vv. 6-10 include? Some say the apostles, as in vv. 1-5. It would seem, however, that a shift has occurred as John begins his application of the tests of authentic Christianity. I take the **"we"** in vv. 6-10 to be what is known as the preacher's **"we"**. **Stott** explains:

The author does clearly identify himself with his readers in many parts of the Epistle, as a preacher does with his congregation in a sermon... In these (and other) 'we' sentences the author is neither speaking editorially nor associating himself with the other apostles but identifying himself with the whole Christian community, or at least with his readers.

I.e., John is simply stating general principles which are applicable to all men equally. This kind of *preacher's we* is often heard in the pulpit. E.g., *"If we reject the claims of Christ we will be eternally lost, but if we trust Christ as our Savior we will be eternally saved."* The **"we"** really means anyone, but in order to associate with his readers he uses **"we"**. Cf. also 1Jn 2:9-11,22 ("the one who") and 1Jn 2:23,29; 3:3,4 ("everyone who").

In support of the interpretation that **"we"** in 1Jn 1:6-10 as a reference to men in general (*"applicable to all men equally"*) notice that John switches from **we** to other ways of identifying those who make false claims. In other words John gives us a number of descriptions of men who **say** one thing and **do** another. In fact **"we say"** occurs only in 1Jn 1:6, 8, 10. John then changes to **"one who says"** (1Jn 2:4, 6, 9) and to **"if someone says"** in 1Jn 4:20. **Observe** that in each of these instances John makes a "positive" statement regarding the faith followed by a negative behavior which in effect "contradicts" this person's positive claim. John repeatedly describes those who **say** one thing and **do** another (See the following table).

I like how **Dr S Lewis Johnson** (past professor of OT Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary) explained the problem John is exposing...

One of the commentators has said, "What we have here is the **lie** of the **lip**" and we also have the **lie** of the **life** characteristic of us as human beings who are sinners... We are responsible not simply **to think** right, but to **do** what is right. In other words, the truth is not simply what we think with the intellect, but it is that which is conformable to God's nature and will and is inclusive of the kind of life that we live. ([First John Sermons](#)) (Bolding and italics added for emphasis)

JOHN'S COMPARISON OF WORDS VS DEEDS

THE SCRIPTURE	WHAT ONE SAYS (THEIR CLAIM) THEIR PROFESSION	WHAT ONE DOES (THEIR LIFESTYLE) THEIR PRACTICE
1John 1:6	"We have fellowship with God"	Walk in Darkness
1John 2:4	"I know Jesus"	Does not keep commandments
1John 2:6	"I abide in Jesus"	Must walk like Jesus
1John 2:9	"I am in the light"	Hates his brother
1John 4:20	"I love God"	Hates his brother

Does not John's pattern of comparing words and deeds remind us of James' comments on Faith and Deeds or Works? (Obviously this question is rhetorical! See James 2:14-26-notes) Or what about John the Baptist's association of repentance and fruit (See Mt 3:8, Lk 3:8)? Or what of our Lord Jesus' emphasis on the importance of fruit in the assessment of one's words? (See Mt 7:17, 18, 19, 20-note, Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22, 23-note, Luke 8:15). And do we dare not hear and heed the solemn warning of Jesus in His conclusion of the most famous and most important sermon (Sermon on the Mount) ever preached?...

Not everyone who says (present tense) to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven (Jesus' *metaphor* for salvation); but he who does (present tense = speaks of general **direction** of one's life **not perfection!**) the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 Many (not *few* but tragically *many!*) will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew (ginosko) you; **DEPART** (aorist imperative - Do this now! Leave immediately!) FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE (present tense = as your lifestyle - cp "walk [present tense] in the darkness" 1Jn 1:6) LAWLESSNESS.' (Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22, 23-note)

Comment: Did you observe our Lord's emphasis on what one **says** versus what one **does**? Note that these individual souls will call Jesus **Lord** and yet they will act like the devil (cp 1Jn 3:8, 10!), continually practicing lawlessness which John says is sin! (Mt 7:23b, cp 1Jn 3:4) Did you observe how Jesus will not dispute their "profession" of works (prophesy, cast out demons, perform many miracles)? Does this not suggest these "works" are actual works these professors will carry out? Why will Jesus command these professors of great "religious works" to depart from His presence? Notice how Jesus uses the verb "**knew**" (ginosko), which John repeatedly uses in his letter also in the context of salvation (Study John's uses of **ginosko** in 1Jn 2:3, 4, 5, 13, 14, 29, 1Jn 3:1, 3:6, 19, 24, 4:2, 4:6, 7, 8, 13, 16, 5:2, 20) (As as aside John uses **ginosko** over 50x in his Gospel! E.g., see John 17:3)

McDermond writes that rather than "**if we say**"...

a better translation here would be **when** (or whenever) **we say**. This translation suggests, as many commentators recognize, that a group is actually claiming to be in fellowship with God even while their lives point to a different reality. Clearly John writes these opening words because some influential person or group is **claiming** to be a model of how to relate to God, and yet the reality of their **lifestyle** leads the believing observer to draw the opposite conclusion. (McDermond, J. E.: 1 John--Commentaries: Believers Church Bible Commentary) (Bolding added for emphasis)

Harris...

The phrase **practicing the truth** means living out the truth in a lifestyle obedient to God. The most important parallel is John 3:20, 21, where we are told "*Everyone who does [= practices] evil hates the light and does not come to the light...but the one who practices the truth comes to the light, so that it may be plainly evident that his deeds have been done in God.*" The problem with the opponents lies not with their boast that they have fellowship with God, but with their contradictory behavior—they continue walking in the darkness.

Bob Utley...

The heretics claimed that fellowship was based on knowledge only (Ed: Gnosticism ~ gnosis = knowledge). This was an aspect of Greek philosophy from Plato. However, John asserts that Christians must live Christlike lives (cf. v. 7; Lev. 19:2; 20:7; Mt 5:48).

McDermond comments that...

The first portion of 1Jn 1:6 highlights this inconsistency. The claim is that some see themselves in **fellowship** with God. In just the

previous verse (1Jn 1:5) the point is made that **God is light**, meaning authentic and good, and there is no darkness in him. Therefore one may (or might) assume that those people claiming fellowship are authentic and good as well. But as the author reflects on their lives, he concludes differently. They are walking in darkness. (McDermond, J. E.: 1 John--Commentaries: Believers Church Bible Commentary)

J Sidlow Baxter (Ibid) comments that First John is...

- an epistle of guiding tests, we would urge that its several chain-themes be carefully traced and studied
- the seven distinguishing traits of the born again (1Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1 (twice), 1Jn 5:4,18);
- the seven reasons why the epistle was written (1Jn 1:3,4; 2:1,13-17,21-24,26; 1Jn 5:13);
- the seven tests of Christian genuineness (1Jn 1:6,8,10; 2:4,6,9; 1Jn 4:20).

Perhaps it may be useful to set out the last mentioned a little more fully. Seven times there is an **"If we say,"** or **"He that saith";** and each time it marks a test by which falsity is exposed. They are seven tests of honesty and reality. They search us. They penetrate like a white flame. They expose hypocrisy. Here they are:

1Jn 1:6 = False fellowship.

1Jn 1:8 = False sanctity.

1Jn 1:10 = False righteousness.

1Jn 2:4 = False allegiance.

1Jn 2:6 = False behavior.

1Jn 2:9 = False spirituality.

1Jn 4:20 = False love to God.

Fellowship (2842) (**koinonia** from **koinos** = that which is in common, belonging to several or of which several are partakers) describes the experience of having something in common and/or of sharing things in common with others. It describes a close association involving mutual interests and sharing or to have communion (Which Webster defines communion as "intimate fellowship") It denotes the active, joint participation, cooperation and/or sharing in a common interest or activity.

John's intended meaning of **fellowship** in this context is one of several keys which will guide our interpretation of not just this section of the letter and for that matter the entire letter. **Fellowship** in 1John 1:6 could refer either to the initial salvation experience or to the subsequent sharing of common interests that follows regeneration (the time referred to as sanctification). The question is whether there are any NT examples of koinonia which refer specifically to the initial salvation experience? Let's observe Paul's statement in First Corinthians...

God is faithful, through Whom you were called into **fellowship** with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1Cor 1:9)

Comment: This passage clearly refers to the initial salvation experience of the Corinthians. **Calling** is an integral component of our salvation experience. When we entered the New Covenant by grace through faith, we entered into a union, a oneness, a common (koinonia - from koinos = that which is in common) life with Christ, Who in fact is now the believer's life (Col 3:4) through His indwelling, ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit (Ro 8:9). This initial "communion" experience with God results in a new spiritual position, "positional" fellowship if you will. In our unregenerate state, we were in Adam, but at regeneration God's Spirit placed us in Christ, into our new position of union with Him. Positional fellowship is of course followed by experiential (relational) fellowship on a day to day basis, but there has to be that initial moment of supernatural "communion" ("fellowship") at the time of conversion. Almost every commentary agrees that koinonia in 1Corinthians 1:9 refers to the the sharing in common that occurs when one is born again.

Bob Utley on "koinonia" in 1Cor 1:9 adds that: God has called us to be in union with His Son both positionally and relationally... Believer's lifestyles after they meet Christ are evidence of their salvation.

The United Bible Society Handbook: Perhaps the most important word in this verse is the one that RSV and TEV translate fellowship. REB replaces this noun by a verb having the same meaning: "to share in the life of his Son." "Share in," of course, simply means "participate in." The text implies that the fellowship into which God calls Christians is the fellowship or communion that he himself has with his Son. So the word that translators use here should not refer specifically to the kind of fellowship that Christians have with one another

in the church. (Ellingworth, Paul; et al; A Handbook on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians)

Expositor's Greek Testament says "koinonia" in this verse does not mean... "into a communion (or partnership) with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord"... , but "into a communion belonging to (and named after) God's Son," of which He is founder, centre and sum.

Gordon Fee: The reference is to what took place at their conversion. The calling to Christ is a calling to be in fellowship with Christ through the Spirit (cf. 2Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1). Thus in all likelihood this language is to be understood not only positionally, but also relationally. Believers are not only in Christ, and as such freed from the guilt of their sins, but are also in fellowship with Christ, and as such are privileged to commune with him through the Spirit. (The First Epistle to the Corinthians - The New International Commentary on the New Testament)

In summary, clearly koinonia is used elsewhere in the NT in the context of initial salvation (regeneration, justification, being born again). It follows that John's use of koinonia in 1John 1:3 and 1John 1:6 could refer to initial salvation. Stated another way, one cannot exclude that John is referring to the initial salvation experience.

So what does it mean to be in fellowship with God? Salvation is the prerequisite, the fellowship wrought by salvation. We are in the family of God. But once we are in the family of God, we need to walk like children of God, children of light, so that we might experience daily, intimate fellowship and communion with God. When we sin, we experience of a loss of communion with God and need to confess our sins to be brought back into fellowship. John desires that his readers be absolutely sure of the former (the fellowship of salvation) for without that fellowship, there can be no daily communion with God.

Spurgeon comments on **fellowship with God** noting that

There were certain in John's day who said, "We have fellowship with God." How they had come by it they did not explain. Perhaps they claimed to have reached it by philosophical speculation, by exact reasoning, or by long-continued meditation. Whatever the road, they said that they had reached the City of God and were in communion with the Great Being. John saw that they **walked in darkness**, rejecting the Light of Divine Revelation from above and the pure Light of the Holy Spirit within. He also saw that they, themselves, were not true, and that their lives were not pure and, therefore, he warned them that they were speaking and acting a lie. Their life was a lie, for they were not walking in the truth. And their profession that they had fellowship with God was another lie, for God can have no fellowship with falsehood. "God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all" and, therefore, He cannot hold any communion with darkness. John draws the lines very tightly and judges with unflinching fidelity—he is not inclined to the boasted charity of latitudinarianism, but he curtly dismisses false claims with that plain word, "lie." The disciple whom Jesus loved spoke like the Son of Thunder that he was when he had to deal with shams. It is the part of true love to be honest and to expose that which would be injurious to those it loves. He who will gloss over a falsehood loves but in word, only. Learn, then, that if men boast of fellowship with God and do not receive the Revelation of His Word, they lie, and know not the Truth of God. ([The Child of Light Walking in the Light](#))

J Sidlow Baxter adds that...

We cannot strictly call (1Jn 1:3) the "key" to the epistle, or say that "fellowship" is John's uppermost subject (seeing that after 1Jn 1:7 the word does not once occur again); yet who can help but realize that the underlying purpose all through is that by avoiding the false and abiding in the truth we should know the pure joy of an unclouded fellowship with God? (Ibid)

Adam Clarke commenting on 1John 1:6 makes the point that

Having fellowship, **koinonia**, communion, with God, necessarily implies a partaking of the Divine nature (**Ed:** In short, one needs to experience regeneration, the new birth).

Listen to what **Charles Haddon Spurgeon** has to say about **fellowship** in 1John...

When we were united by faith to Christ, we were brought into such complete fellowship with Him, that we were made one with Him, and His interests and ours became mutual and identical. (**Ed comment:** Notice that Spurgeon associates faith in Christ which brings us into oneness as synonymous with fellowship with Christ. There must be this initial experience of fellowship, but this leads to an ongoing daily , sharing of His love, His desires, His sufferings, His joys.)

We have fellowship with Christ in His love What He loves we love. He loves the saints-so do we. He loves sinners-so do we. He loves the poor perishing race of man, and pants to see earth's deserts transformed into

the garden of the Lord-so do we.

We have fellowship with Him in His desires. He desires the glory of God-we also labor for the same. He desires that the saints may be with Him where He is-we desire to be with Him there too. He desires to drive out sin-behold we fight under His banner. He desires that his Father's Name may be loved and adored by all His creatures-we pray daily, "Let thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven."

We have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings We are not nailed to the cross, nor do we die a cruel death, but when He is reproached, we are reproached; and a very sweet thing it is to be blamed for His sake, to be despised for following the Master, to have the world against us. The disciple should not be above his Lord. In our measure we commune with him in His labors, ministering to men by the Word of Truth and by deeds of love. Our meat and our drink, like His, is to do the will of Him Who hath sent us and to finish His work.

We have also fellowship with Christ in His joys We are happy in His happiness, we rejoice in His exaltation. Have you ever tasted that joy, believer? There is no purer or more thrilling delight to be known this side heaven than that of having Christ's joy fulfilled in us, that our joy may be full.

His glory awaits us to complete our fellowship, for His Church shall sit with Him upon His throne, as His well-beloved bride and queen.

Marvin Vincent writes that

The true life in man, which comes through the acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God, consists in **fellowship** with God and with man. (Vincent, M. R. Word studies in the New Testament)

Tyndale Bible Dictionary succinctly defines **fellowship** as...

Communion with God, which results in common participation with other believers in the Spirit of God and God's blessings. ([Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. Tyndale Bible Dictionary. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers](#))

With Him - with God. The unique **fellowship** between Father and Son began in eternity, was manifested itself in time through the incarnation of Jesus, was introduced to the apostles, and then introduced to every believer via reception of the Spirit of Christ at the new birth (cp Ro 8:9, 2Cor 13:14; Phil 2:1).

As **John Stott** explains the believer's **fellowship** with God is

that common participation in the grace of God, the salvation of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit which is the spiritual birthright of all Christian believers. It is their common possession of life -- one with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which makes them one.

Sam Storms has an addendum in one of his messages on First John that specifically addresses the interpretation of **fellowship**...

The point at issue is whether or not the Bible (specifically 1 John) uses the word **fellowship** (koinonia) to describe a temporal relationship between God and the Christian, a relationship both breakable (by sin) and restorable (by confession); a relationship based upon but distinct from and more than salvation. The issue is not whether the concept proposed by (Zane) Hodges is biblical.

That a believer can and does sin is a biblical fact (1 John 2:1).

That a believer can and does hide and repress his sin is also substantiated by Scripture.

That such a refusal to acknowledge one's sin can and does disrupt one's daily walk and spiritual relationship with the Lord is also both a fact of Scripture and experience (1Cor. 11:29-32; 3:1-4; John 13:10; Heb. 12:5-8; Psalm 32; etc.).

The debate is over the terms used to describe this concept. That is to say, does the NT word for **fellowship** specify "**temporal**" **fellowship** or "**eternal**" **fellowship**?

I believe the latter is true. This has profound implications for the interpretation of 1 John. If by "fellowship" the biblical authors (including John) meant "eternal" salvation, then John's first epistle was not written to describe and promote "temporal" fellowship between God and believer.

What evidence is there for concluding that John did not write this epistle with the notion of "temporal" fellowship in view?

First, consider the usage of the word koinonia in the NT. Excluding the four times it is used in 1 John, the word "fellowship" is

found 14x in the NT, 12 of which are in Paul's writings. The word means "association with and/or participation in" someone and/or something. Beyond that the context must decide its nuance.

Six times it is used in an abstract sense of the believer's common association with other believers in a specified activity or sphere (1 Cor. 10:16,17; 2 Cor. 8:4; Phil. 1:5; 3:10; Philemon 6).

Two times it is used of the brotherly unity within the Christian community (Acts 2:42; Gal. 2:9; the two uses in 1 John [1:3a,7] which speak of Christian/Christian relationship would probably fit here), and three times in the developed sense of a gift or contribution (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 9:13; Heb. 13:16).

The other three usages are of the believer's relationship to the Godhead (1Cor. 1:9; 2Cor. 13:14; Phil 2:1). Fellowship in 1Cor 1:9 clearly speaks of the believer's eternal association with Christ through God's gracious and effectual call. 2Cor 13:14 and Phil 2:1 speak of the believer and his/her "fellowship" of/with the Holy Spirit.

What, then, of the word "fellowship" as it describes the relationship between God and believer in 1 John 1:3b and 1John 6a? I believe that in light of 1Cor 1:9 and what we will discover upon studying 1 John as a whole that **fellowship** in this latter epistle is synonymous with **"salvation"**.

Stott writes:

"The purpose of the proclamation of the gospel is, therefore, not salvation but fellowship. Yet, properly understood, this is the meaning of salvation in its widest embrace, including reconciliation to God in Christ ... , holiness of life ... , and incorporation in the Church ... This fellowship is the meaning of eternal life ... As the Son, Who is that eternal life, was (eternally) with the Father, so He purposes that we should have fellowship with them and with each other... 'Fellowship' is a specifically Christian word and denotes that common participation in the grace of God, the salvation of Christ and the indwelling Spirit which is the spiritual birthright of all Christian believers" (63).

What we will see from our study of 1John 1:6-10 is that the contrast is not between two types of believers, those "in" as opposed to those "out" of fellowship, but between Christians who are "in", or rather "have", fellowship with God and non-Christians who are not and do not.

Second, contrary to what Hodges suggests, 1Jn 1:3 does not say that the letter was written in order that these believers might have fellowship with God and His Son Jesus Christ. Note carefully:

The purpose of announcing the message of eternal life was so that the readers might have fellowship with John. Brotherly fellowship could be entered into after salvation and subsequently broken and restored (cf. Gal. 2:9). The influence of the false teachers had fractured John's relationship with the church(es) to which he writes and he pens this letter to restore it. Having said this, John then adds that the apostles' fellowship is with God. He does not say, as Hodges supposes, that the readers have fellowship first with the apostles and, as a result, with the Father and Son. The Greek construction (kai de) means "but also" or "what is more," making the clause an additional disjunctive thought rather than a subordinate idea of result. John's emphasis appears to be that the apostles' fellowship, in emphatic contrast to the false teachers' fellowship (note the "our"), is with the Father and Son. In other words, John is not writing with a two-fold purpose in mind (namely, to promote fellowship with the apostles and with the Father and Son, as if a believer might not possess the latter). John's stated purpose in 1:3 is simply that the readers might have fellowship with him. The purpose is extended somewhat in v. 4 to include the fulfilling of the apostle's joy.

Third, to understand the God/Christian fellowship of 1John 1:3-10 as a temporal, breakable relationship demands that we understand the contrasts in the rest of the book to be about Christians who are "in" and Christians who are "out" of fellowship with God. However, closer study will reveal that the contrasts are in fact between Christians and non-Christians. ([Scroll Down for "A Response to Zane Hodges' View of the Purpose of 1 John"](#))

THE TRUTH ABOUT WALKING IN DARKNESS

If we say... if we walk - Once again observe the clear juxtaposition by John of what we **say** with what we actually **do**! In this context John is saying that some were in effect saying that sin does not matter as demonstrated by their lifestyle. John may be addressing the incipient Gnostic heresy which said that since the body was evil one could live anyway they wished and it would not affect the destiny of their spirit which was pure.

And yet walk in the darkness - Wuest says *"This person is said to be walking in the darkness which is not in God, namely, sin."* Wuest's paraphrases this passages as...

and in the sphere of the aforementioned darkness are habitually ordering our behavior (The New Testament: An Expanded Translation)

Marshall says that there is one sense ...

in which all Christians live in the darkness. They live in this world which is opposed to God (see 1Jn 2:15–17) and characterized by darkness. But the situation of the Christian is like that of a person walking on a dark stage in the circle of light cast by a spotlight which is focused on him; he moves slowly forward so that he can walk in its light without fear of stumbling and losing his way. (The Epistles of John - The New International Commentary on the New Testament)

We walk (4043)(**peripateo** from **peri** = about, around + **pateo** = walk, tread) means literally to walk around, to go here and there in walking, to tread all around. The 39 uses in the Gospels refer to literal walking. Seven of the 8 uses in Acts are also in the literal sense (except Acts 21:21). When we come to the epistles of Paul **peripateo** is used only in the metaphorical sense referring to the conduct of one's life, the ordering of one's behavior. John also frequently uses **peripateo** in the figurative sense referring to one's ordinary course of life (See 1Jn 2:6, 11; 2 John 4, 6; 3 John 3, 4; Rev 21:24-note; John 8:12).

Uteley explains that "**walk**"...

is a biblical **metaphor** expressing a moral lifestyle (cf. Eph 4:1-note, Eph 4:17-note; Eph 5:2-note, Eph 5:15-note). God is light with no darkness. His children should be like Him (cf. Mt 5:48-note).

Alford observes that the verb **peripateo**...

often in the NT (speaks) of the whole being and moving and turning in the world ([1 John 1 Commentary](#))

It is important to note that the verb **peripateo** is in the **present tense** which means that those who make a claim or profession of having **fellowship with God**, at the same time are choosing to continually, habitually live **in the darkness**!

Alfred Plummer comments that the meaning of **walk** in the **present tense**...

expresses not merely action, but habitual action. A life in moral darkness can no more have communion with God, than a life in a coal-pit can have communion with the sun. For 'what communion hath light with darkness?' (2Cor. 6:4). Light can be shut out, but it cannot be shut in. Some Gnostics taught, not merely that to the illuminated (**Ed**: intellectually enlightened) all conduct was alike, but that to reach the highest form of illumination (**Ed**: "enlightenment") men must experience every kind of action, however abominable, in order to work themselves free from the powers that rule the world. ([1 John Commentary](#))

Colin Kruse notes that...

What it actually means to '**walk in the light**' and to '**walk in the darkness**' is not explained in this letter. Probably the best explanation of what it means is to be found in the Fourth Gospel (Read John 3:19, 20, 21) This suggests that 'walking in the light' involves a willingness to be open towards God and his revelation in Christ, while 'walking in the darkness' involves a refusal to do this (The Pillar New Testament Commentary – The Letters of John)

(**Kruse** quotes Charles Baylis who concludes that 'walking "in the light" means receiving God's revelation of Himself through His Son, and receiving eternal life and forgiveness of sins', while 'walking "in the darkness" is walking in death, rejecting that revelation'. Baylis adds "*walking in darkness means abiding "in death" and not having eternal life abiding in one. The one who walks "in the darkness" is one who has rejected the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, eternal life (the light).*" See [The Meaning of Walking "in the Darkness" 1 John 1:6\) -- By Charles P. Baylis Bibliotheca Sacra 149:594, April 1992](#))

As **John Stott** says

The present tense in the Greek verb implied habit, continuity, unbroken sequence.

McDermond adds that...

Here **walk** is in the present subjunctive in the phrase "while we are walking," suggesting that this possible condition is a continuous or habitual pattern of behavior, and that such people are repeatedly and consistently choosing darkness over the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ (see 1Jn 1:1–4). (Ibid)

John Butler...

One of the heresies of that day was the idea that you could live in sin and at the same time be in fellowship

with God. For “fellowship” to occur one must have things in common with the one with whom he wants to fellowship. Therefore a person cannot live willfully in sin and have things in common with God Who is holy. Those who claim to have fellowship with God and who live unholy lives are fakers. They are not real believers. (Analytical Bible Expositor: 1, 2, 3 John & Jude)

William MacDonald

A man who says he has fellowship with Him and habitually walks in darkness was never saved at all.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones describes walking in darkness...

walking in darkness (means) living in the realm of darkness, being controlled by the ideas of the world and of sin, belonging to a kingdom, the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of this world, the kingdom that is rebellious against the kingdom of God. In other words, the people who walk in darkness are not those who, as it were, are constantly committing some foul sin. They may be highly respectable — indeed, they may be very moral — but **they are walking in darkness because they are outside the light of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; it is a realm to which people belong; it is an outlook upon life in general.** (Fellowship With God) (Bolding mine).

W E Vine

The conditions thus laid down serve to distinguish actual possession from mere profession. There is an intimation of what the apostle develops more fully in the body of the epistle, namely, the distinguishing mark which differentiates the children of God from the children of the devil (see 3:10). In this passage the distinction is between walking in darkness and walking in the light. The former is the condition of the unregenerate, the latter of those who are related to Him who is light (1Jn 1:5). To walk in the light we must be partakers of His nature. The word rendered “walk” suggests the habitual or constant course of life.

Monty Mills comments that...

The purpose of this section (1Jn 1:5-7) is to stress that the change in the believer’s lifestyle is a proof of the fact that he has indeed been cleansed from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ and that therefore he has fellowship with God. (Letters from John : a Study Guide to I, II and III John; 3E Ministries. 1997)

Jim Bomkamp lists the following indicators or marks of a genuine believer from John's first chapter...

1. Walks in the light - 1Jn 1:6
2. Has fellowship with other Christians who walk in the light - 1Jn 1:7
3. Believes he has a sin nature - 1Jn 1:8
4. Occasionally sins - 1Jn 1:10

(see [34 Marks of a True Christian in 1 John](#)).

Listen to Dr. John Piper’s concluding remarks from his sermon on 1John 1:5-10...

Some people think that the only way to make the Gospel really good news is to deny that changes are necessary in our lives. They say that takes away the possibility of assurance of salvation. They say the way we live after putting our faith in Christ has nothing to do with our salvation. I answer that a powerless Gospel is not good news. A Gospel that only wins lip service is not different than all the other philosophies of the world. Such a Gospel produces a Christianity that is a game of words. It encourages lukewarm church-goers that they are safe from God’s wrath because of some inherited mental assent to the love of God. Such a Gospel accounts for how 40 million people can claim to be born again in America at the same time that our moral condition is an all time low of corruption inside and outside the church.

The message of 1 John—that walking in the light is not optional, but necessary for salvation—is good news because it creates the moral atmosphere of urgency in which serious business is done with God.

It gives the flavor of eternity to all we say and do. It militates against religious gamesmanship. It honors the purpose of God in Christ to destroy the works of the devil. It takes seriously the necessity of glorifying God in our bodies.

It leads people to real faith instead of encouraging them to be content with a lip service that cannot change and cannot save.

But in the end it simply is not up to us to decide whether the Gospel is the kind of good news we would like it to be. Ours is simply to listen and submit to the Word of God. And the Word of God says that **"if we walk in the light as he is in the light ... the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."** If we walk in darkness, we cut ourselves off from the cleansing effects of Christ's blood. And if we cut ourselves off from Christ's blood, where will hope be found! (Bolding added for emphasis). ([let-us-walk-in-the-light-of-god](#))

The venerable expositor **Charles Simeon** commenting on 1Jn 1:6 says that...

Many will pretend to have **communion** (fellowship) with God, while they are ignorant of the salvation revealed in the Gospel, and living in the habitual indulgence of sin. But, while they thus **"walk in darkness,"** what **"fellowship can they have with God?"** What access can they have to Him, when they do not so much as know the way of "access to Him through the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh?" and what regard can they feel in their hearts towards Him, while they are under the allowed dominion of worldly and carnal lusts? Their **profession** is a system of falsehood and hypocrisy: "they lie, and do not the truth:" they may work up themselves to ecstasies if they will; **but they neither have, nor can have, any fellowship with God;** for how "shall the throne of iniquity (or one in whom sin reigns) have fellowship with Him?" (Ps 94:20) "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2Cor 6:14)...

From this most instructive subject we may learn

The connection between faith and works—One man hopes to be saved by his works, while he disregards faith in Christ: another hopes that his faith will save him, though it never produce good works. But both of these deceive their own souls: for no man can do such works as the Gospel requires, unless he embrace the truths which it reveals: and, if he could do them, they would be utterly insufficient to justify him before God. On the other hand, "the faith that is without works, is dead:" and as it differs not from the faith of devils, so will it bring us no better portion than theirs. Knowledge is necessary to produce holiness; and holiness is necessary to evince that our knowledge is truly spiritual and saving. It is not by separating them from each other, but by uniting them together, that we are to "walk in the light as God is in the light."

The connection between duty and happiness—The greater part of the world expect happiness in the ways of sin: but God has warned us that there is "no peace to the wicked." There is no real happiness but in fellowship with God: and there is no fellowship with him, without a conformity to him. If then we would be happy in this world, we should be religious: we should study to know and do the will of God. Then we should be happy in sickness as well as in health, and in the prospect of death no less than in the midst of earthly enjoyments.

The connection between grace and glory—The saints in glory are called "saints in light;" (Col 1:12-note) and in order to partake of their inheritance, we must be "made meet for it." **An unregenerate sinner would not be happy, even if he were in heaven.** There is a total difference of character between them that are saved and them that perish: those who are saved, love God, and delight in Him, and make it the labor of their souls to glorify Him: whereas they who perish, would, if they were able, pluck Him from His throne: it would be glad tidings to them if they were informed that He exists no longer. Such precisely is the difference between saints and sinners in this world; the one find all their happiness in serving God; the other say in their hearts, "We wish there were no God." Neither the one nor the other indeed attain the same degree of holiness or wickedness in this world that they will in the next: **but in all other respects their characters will continue the same that they are in this life.** If ever then we would have **fellowship with God in heaven,** we must begin it here: and, if ever we would dwell with Him in the regions of everlasting light, we must now be "brought out of darkness into the marvelous light" of His Gospel (1Pe 2:9-note) and "walk henceforth as children of the light and of the day." (Eph 5:8-note) ([1John 1:5-7 The Importance of Being Conformed to God's Image - 1832-63](#)) (Bolding added for emphasis)

David Legge explains the truth of 1John 1:6 theologically and practically...

Theologically what John was trying to bring to their attention was this: that if they walk in darkness, and claim to have light from God, they are potentially opening themselves up to fellowship with others outside the grounds of the Gospel. That's exactly what was happening. They were following a false Christ, they were imbibing the Greek philosophy of the day that was fashionable intellectually and socially. What Paul said to the Corinthians could be said to some of these Ephesians: 'What fellowship hath light with darkness, and Belial with the Living God? What fellowship hath Christ with temple idols?'. My friend, here is a lesson for us today theologically: the only grounds on which we can have fellowship with another man or woman in humanity, as brothers and sisters in Christ, is on the foundation of the Gospel. **If they deny the fundamentals of the**

Gospel, they cannot be considered authentically Christian, and they're not proclaiming or declaring the Gospel according to Christ, and we cannot have fellowship with them. Theologically they had to learn that in Ephesus, we need to learn it today. Other side of the coin regarding that truth is that in the one regard we must always fellowship on the grounds of the Gospel. We must never add to it anything else other than the Gospel. What was happening here in Ephesus was there was an elitism - it could have been charismatic in the sense that these false teachers were coming along and saying they had a personal privileged knowledge of God greater than the rest. They were making the other believers second-class citizens. They were believing themselves to be above those Christians, that those Christians were not worthy of their fellowship, so they split off in schism...

Secondly this has a practical implication... it was practically seen and evidenced in John's day and in ours. Here is the first way it was seen: people were living in sin and claiming that they had the life of God. (They were) Living practically in a lifestyle of habitual sin, yet claiming that they were in fellowship with God. This has been given a theological name: **antinomianism**. Now don't switch off when you hear these big names... What you have in antinomianism is 'anti-lawism', Christians - so-called - who were saying, *'We can trust Christ and have the life of God, be in fellowship with the brethren and in fellowship with the Father through Christ, yet live a life that is against the law of God, and even in contradiction of it.'* That's what was written of in Romans 6 when Paul asked the rhetorical question, hypothetically: 'Should we continue in sin that grace may abound?' (Ro 6:1). Of course he said: 'God forbid' - but what was coming into vogue here was dualism of the Gnostics... they were saying that everything spiritual is pure, and everything physical is evil - therefore they believed that the body would be burned up in the judgment, and it didn't matter what you did with the body as long as you had eternal life in your soul...

I shared this with you a number of Sunday nights ago, the story of J. P. Mehaffey who was a famous scholar and man of the world from Trinity College in Dublin. When he was asked if he was a Christian, he answered: *'Yes, but not offensively so'*. What he meant by that statement was, he didn't let his *"Christianity"* interfere with his social life. That is exactly what John is preaching against:

**You cannot claim to have the life of God
and walk in darkness,
and live habitually in sin.**

Indeed, many cults fall into this trap because of their fundamental error. In the 1960s, during the sexual revolution, there was a group called the 'Children of God' cult, and they actually taught that people could be won for Christ through sinful means. You may find that staggering, but that is exactly what happened in John the apostle's day - so much so that they declared that there could be a 'hooker' who was a Christian... and win men for Jesus! That was almost 40 years ago, and there's a mentality about today that is quite similar. American gangster Mickey Cohen reputedly converted to Christ, and then later declared that he wanted to be a *'Christian gangster'*... there was this idea that you could live the life of God, yet live a life of sin - and it is impossible. In fact, what John is saying is: if you claim that, the life of God is not in you!... what we're talking about here is not just falling into sin now and again - we all do that, and we all try with the Spirit's help not to - but what John's talking about is a lifestyle of habitual sin that marks you out as an habitual sinner, addicted to sin. If you live in sin, you cannot claim the life of God in your soul - that's the Gospel, and we need to herald it out today, because there's an easy-believism that says: 'Come as you are'. That's the Gospel alright, but it lacks repentance (**Ed**: See the Gospel Jesus proclaimed - Mk 1:15) - to come as you are, *but* be willing to give up your sin, and Christ will enable you to give up your sin (**Ed**: Note Paul's clear contrast in Ro 8:13-note). In fact, people are coming to Christ with the one hand, and keeping their sin with the other - and that's not salvation! I hope you haven't believed that one. ([The Gospel According To Christ](#))

Harris writes that...

The significance of the present tense of peripatōmen ("keep on walking") in 1Jn 1:6. The context of this statement in 1:6 indicates clearly that the progressive (sometimes called continuative, or durative) use of the present tense, one of its most common uses, must be in view here. The relationship of (peripatōmen) to (eipōmen) is of particular importance for understanding the problem expressed in 1:6. We have already noted above that the first (kai, "and yet") in 1John 1:6 has adversative force. If someone should say (eipōmen) that he has fellowship with God, **and yet** continues walking (peripatōmen) in the darkness, **then it follows** (as expressed in the apodosis of the conditional sentence) that such a person is lying and not practicing the truth. The author almost certainly has the claims of the opponents in view here.

The background of the light/darkness motif introduced in 1:6. The author's problem with the claim of the opponents lies not with the boast that they have fellowship with God, but with their contradictory behavior: they continue walking "in the darkness" at the same time they are making the claim to have fellowship with God. To the author this proves conclusively that they are lying, as the author points out in the apodosis (1:6b). The contrast with light occurs because the opponents claim to have fellowship with God, who has been characterized as "light" in 1John 1:5.

The light/darkness motif in Johannine theology. In the Old Testament God is compared with light on several occasions (e.g., Ps 27:1; 36:9). The contrast between light and darkness is also a major theme in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 1:9–10). The light/darkness motif occurs in a number of places in the New Testament (cf., for example, Eph 5:6–8), but it is especially evident in the Johannine literature. It is an important theme of the prologue to the Gospel of John, especially 1:5. One of the most important sections of the Gospel, containing the key to a number of themes within it, is John 3:16–21. In John 3:19 we are told that people "loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil." The author goes on to state in John 3:20 that "everyone who practices evil hates the light" and refuses to come to it, because of fear that his evil deeds will be exposed for what they are. Finally in John 3:21 the one who "practices the truth" (same phrase as 1 John 1:6) comes to the light.

The picture painted by John 3:16–21 is one where one's affinity for 'light' and 'darkness' serves to reveal one's inner nature. One is forced to a decision to ally oneself with one side or the other. A response is evoked; one cannot just remain neutral. Either one comes to the light, and it becomes evident that one belongs there, or one hates the light and shrinks back into the darkness to hide from it.

The imagery of response used in John 3:16–21 applies to an individual's response to Jesus himself, Who is identified as "the true Light" in John 1:4 and Who identifies Himself as "the Light of the world" in John 8:12.

The significance of the light/darkness motif in 1 John 1:6. Because of the central role this theme plays in the Gospel of John, it is almost certainly behind the introduction of the motif in 1 John 1:6. The opponents, who **profess** that they have "come to the light" (using the language of John 3) have not in reality done so, and for the author of 1 John their **deeds prove it**, because they are continuing to "**walk in darkness**." Rather, their way of life ("walking") demonstrates that they are lying in their claim to have fellowship with God who is light. ([W Hall Harris III - 1John 1:5-22: Exegetical Commentary](#))

In the darkness - Notice John says "*in*" not "*according to*". The idea is "in the sphere of" darkness. Even as a fish is in the atmosphere of water, this person is in the "environment" of the darkness, spiritual darkness as discussed below.

Wuest explains in the darkness noting first that

The case of the noun is locative of sphere. He walks, that is, orders his behavior, conducts himself (peripateō) in the sphere of the darkness of sin. His actions and words are ensphered by sin. Nothing of God's righteousness or goodness ever enters that circle of sin which surrounds this person. The individual making this claim of fellowship with God while at the same time ordering his behavior within the sphere of sin, is an unsaved person. John says that in making that claim, he is lying, and he is not doing the truth.

Related Resource:

- See study of meaning and significance of locative of sphere

Plummer

'In darkness' should probably be in the darkness: in 1Jn 1:6, 7, as in 1Jn 2:8, 9, 11, both light and darkness have the article in the Greek, which is not merely generic but emphatic; that which is light indeed is opposed to that which is darkness indeed. In 2Cor 6:14, 'What communion hath light with darkness?', neither word has the article.

Darkness ([4655](#)) (**skotos** from **skia** = shadow thrown by an object. Skia it can assume the meaning of skotos and indicate the sphere of darkness) is literally that sphere in which light is absent. As most of know all too well by personal experience, the absence of light leaves room for evil and sin. In this sense **darkness** may be described as evil.

Skotos can refer to literal darkness as occurred on the day of Jesus' crucifixion (Mt 27:45) or darkness as opposed to light in the creation (2Cor 4:6).

Skotos is used as another name for the place of punishment, eternal misery and eternal separation from God (**the meaning of skotos here in 2Peter**) .

Skotos is used by John here in 1John 1:6 (and 1Jn 2:8, 9, 11) with the figurative meaning of **spiritual or moral darkness** (including a lack of understanding) as in the following examples

"(Jesus declared) And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the **darkness** rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. (John 3:19)

"(the gospel would) open their eyes so that they may turn from **darkness** to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' (Acts 26:18)

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the **darkness**, we lie and do not practice the truth (truth is not only something we should believe and teach but also something we should practice, otherwise our life is a "lie") (1John 1:6)

And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of **darkness**, but instead even expose them; (Ephesians 5:11-note)

For He (the Father) delivered us from the domain of **darkness**, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, (Col 1:13-note)

Comment: We have been set free from the right and the might (domain) of darkness, here darkness personified as a place that exerts absolute power over those it imprisons! Why would we want to walk back into that dark place of spiritual bondage?

The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of **darkness** and put on the armor of light. (Ro 13:12-note)

C H Spurgeon comments...

Mark here, this does not mean walking in the darkness of sorrow, for there are many of God's people that walk in the darkness of doubts and fears, and yet they have fellowship with God; nay, they sometimes have fellowship with Christ all the better for the darkness of the path along which they walk, but the darkness here meant is the darkness of sin, the darkness of untruthfulness. If I walk in a lie, or walk in sin, and then profess to have fellowship with God, I have lied, and do not the truth.

The Full Life Study Bible comments...

To "walk in the darkness" means to live outside of God's truth and a personal relationship with him. It means to reject God's standards and pursue one's own direction toward selfish and immoral pleasure. People who live this way do not "have fellowship with him," and are "not born of God" (cf. 1John 3:7-9; Jn 3:19; 2Co 6:14). Their actions show that they do not have a saving relationship with God. But those who have accepted God's forgiveness and the opportunity to have true companionship with Christ experience his favor, help and strength to live in spiritual purity and to do what is right by God's standard (1Jn 1:7; 2:4; 3:10).

Sam Storms notes that John's phrase "**walk in the darkness**" gives us...

the first hints of Johannine dualism (an *ethical*, not *metaphysical* dualism):

- truth vs. falsehood
- good vs. evil
- joy vs. sorrow
- safety vs. peril
- life vs. death
- love vs. hate
- children of God vs. children of the Devil
- of God vs. not of God
- not of the world vs. of the world
- knowledge vs. ignorance, etc

The tests which follow fall into two categories: First, the lifestyle test, i.e., how one lives; the overall characteristic tendencies of an individual's practice. This is found in 1John 1:6-7. Second, is the

hamartiological (hamartiology = study of the doctrine of sin) test, i.e., how one understands and responds to the nature and reality of sin. This is found in 1Jn 1:8-10.

(John first deals with) exposure of the unbeliever in 1John 1:6.

John's phrase, "if we say" (1John 1:6,8,10) points to his concern with how our conduct corresponds to our claim. One need not conclude that the false teachers actually made these exact claims, but they are no doubt an accurate representation of their point of view. The point is: a person's verbal **profession** is only as good as the **practice** of his/her life.

The meaning of "**fellowship with Him**" will depend on whether one takes this as synonymous with salvation or as a reference to experiential harmony with God. I take it to be the former, and thus a claim to have experienced genuine conversion. Cf. 1John 2:4,9.

To "walk in the darkness" may not seem so bad until one realizes that "God is light" (1Jn 1:6a)! "To walk" (peripateo) is metaphorical = "to live" (see Jn 8:12; Ro 6:4-note; Gal. 5:16-note; Eph. 5:1-note). The present tense of the verb stresses the habitual nature of living. To walk in darkness is not merely to commit an act of sin but refers to a lifestyle characterized by darkness, i.e., that which is the moral antithesis of God. "**Darkness**" is obviously the opposite of "**light**" (i.e., truth and holiness), hence error and unrighteousness. Cf. 1John 2:9, 10, 11; 3:10. I conclude that to be "**in darkness**" = to be "not of God," i.e., lost. See Jn 11:9,10; 12:35,36,46; Eph 5:8-note, Ep 5:9-note; 1Th 5:5-note; 1Pt. 2:9-note; Acts 26:18.

John's point is that the person who claims to be in **fellowship with God** (i.e., be saved) yet consistently and characteristically walks in darkness is a liar. What do they lie about?... their claim to be Christians!

"We are right," says Stott, "to be suspicious of those who claim a mystical intimacy with God and yet 'walk in the darkness' of error and sin, paying no regard to the self-revelation of an all-holy God. **Since God is light, such claims are ludicrous. Religion without morality is an illusion**" (Ibid).

What does this tell us about our tendency to naively believe everyone's "verbal profession" of faith in God/Jesus?

Observe John's reference to "**doing**" the truth. The truth of Christianity is not simply something to be believed. It is not merely a matter of theological reflection or intellectual persuasion. It is, rather, a comprehensive embrace by both our minds and in our lives of all that God has revealed ([1John Sermon Comments](#)) (Bolding added for emphasis).

Comment: **George Barna** has reported that as many of 45% of Americans claim to be "born again." [March 27, 2006](#) And yet according to Michael Horton in those same surveys they find that those who make this claim are "*as likely to embrace lifestyles every bit as hedonistic, materialistic, self-centered, and sexually immoral as the world in general*" (Michael Horton - Modern Reformation. May-June, 1993) (E.g., [Born Again Christians Just As Likely to Divorce As Are Non-Christians](#)) ([Changes in Worldview Among Christians](#)).

Wayne Barber relates **walking** (present tense) **in the darkness** to the truth about believers taught in 2Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away;
behold, new things have come. (**note**)

The word **new** is the same word used for **New** Covenant, **New** Testament and (in Greek) is the word **kainos** which means absolutely, qualitatively brand new, never seen before. What did you use to do? You lived in darkness. You hid your sin under darkness. That is the judgment that has come into the world (John 3:19). What happened when light came into your life?... The light exposed you and you saw yourself as a sinner. You came out of the darkness. Ephesians says you were once darkness, now you have been made light (Eph 5:8-note). How can a person who has been made light go back and live habitually in darkness? John is saying you can't do that. "Well," you might say, "if that is the case, there are a lot of people who have joined the church who aren't saved." That is what I am saying. (**Ed:** In other words, there are people in churches around the world who are professing Christ but whose practice demonstrates no evidence of a Christ like walk. This is a frightening thought!)

Steven Cole applies the truths in this section reminding us that...

we need to apply this personally. If as a way of life, I am not allowing God's Word to confront my sinful thoughts, attitudes, motives, words, and deeds, I am **walking in darkness**. If I dodge my sin by blaming others or making up excuses for why I sin, I am **walking in darkness**. And for John, to walk in darkness is **not**

describing a “*carnal*” Christian. It is describing an unbeliever, no matter how much he may claim to have fellowship with God.

**He who lives in sin
and looks for happiness hereafter
is like him who sows cockle
and thinks to fill his barn with wheat or barley.**

- John Bunyan

WE LIE AND DO NOT PRACTICE THE TRUTH: pseudometha (1PPM/PI) kai ou poioumen (1PPAI) ten aletheian

- **we lie:** 1Jn 1:10 4:20 Jn 8:44,45 1Ti 4:2
- **do not:** Jn 3:21
- [1 John 1 Resources](#)

Compare these other passages in First John that deal with lying...

The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is **aliar**, and the **truth** is not in him (1Jn 2:4)

I have not written to you because you do not know the **truth**, but because you do know it, and because no **lie** is of the truth. (1Jn 2:21)

And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is **true** and is **not a lie**, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. (1Jn 2:27)

Although the word "**lie**" is not used, the principle practiced is the same in this passage...

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1Jn 4:1)

Now, as you compare Scripture with Scripture, do these passages that speak of lying help you interpret John's statement "**we lie and do not practice the truth**"? Notice the repeated contrast between **truth** and **lie**.

Spurgeon comments that

THE Apostle warns us against saying more than we have made our own by experience. He hints at the solemn difference between empty profession and gracious reality. To have fellowship with God is a great matter—but merely to say that we have fellowship with Him is a totally different thing. John warns us that if we say that which our characters do not support, we lie. He leaves it just so, without a word of softening or excuse. Between saying and being—between saying and doing—there may be all the difference in the world. There is a tendency among men, if there is a good experience, to say that they possess it; if there is a high privilege of Grace, to say that they are enjoying it. What a folly this is! It is akin to madness! To unsound minds, a precious original suggests a desire to fashion an imitation. To the untruthful mind, the genuine is an invitation to be the counterfeit. Let us be upon our guard that we do not flatter ourselves into saying more than is true. Let us not stretch our arm beyond our sleeve, nor boast beyond our line. Every profession will be tried with fire—let us, therefore, see to it that we put in no claim which will not endure the severest test. ([The Child of Light Walking in the Light](#))

We lie (5574)(**pseudomai** from **pseudo** = to cheat, defraud, falsify) means to communicate what is false, with the evident purpose of misleading. In the context of this verse, the one we are misleading is ourselves! Self deception! The Greek term and the English equivalent 'to lie' involve more than simply telling what is not true, for this could occur without an intent to deceive or mislead. It means means to tell a falsehood, attempt to deceive by lying, to speak falsely or deceitfully. In the present context John is saying in essence that we lie by our actions. And thus we might say one thing with our lips but another with our life! **Pseúdomai** therefore involves not only the communication of a falsehood but also the intent to deceive (cp our intrinsic ability to even deceive ourselves - Jer 17:9 cp Heb 3:12, 13-note)

Plummer on "**we lie, and do not the truth**"...

Antithetic parallelism, as in v. 5. The negative statement here carries us further than the positive one: it

includes conduct as well as speech. See on John 3:21, where 'doing the truth' is opposed to 'practising evil'. It is also the opposite of 'doing a lie' (Rev. 21:27, 22:15).

Kruse comments that those who habitually **walk in the darkness** ...

are guilty of lying about their relationship with God. According to the message heard from Christ, God is light, there is no fellowship between light and darkness, and therefore their claim to have fellowship with God (while walking in darkness) is false. (Ibid)

Comment: And as we have seen in 1Cor 1:9 fellowship with God is initiated by His calling us into salvation and that fellowship is maintained by the Holy Spirit (2Cor 13:14, Php 2:1).

We lie and do not practice the truth - The Pulpit Commentary has "we are false both in word and deed." As noted elsewhere both verbs (*lie* and *practice*) are in the **present tense** which can be paraphrased...

"We habitually lie and continually do not practice the truth."

It seems inconceivable to me that some commentators consider this individual to be a genuine Christian and explain that he or she is simply not in fellowship with God. Sure, all genuine believers lie occasionally, **BUT** genuine Christians do not lie as their general lifestyle. All Christians fail to practice the truth, **BUT** genuine Christians do not fail to practice the truth as their habitual practice!

THE TRUTH ABOUT LYING

It also seems that John considers the habitual practice of lying a very serious matter which should cause the practitioner to do some deep soul searching including meditating on John's passages that describe the eternal destiny of habitual liars.

In the near context in chapter 2 John makes another strong statement writing that...

The one who **says**, "I have come to know (ginosko in the perfect tense = They claim to have come to know Jesus at some point in time in the past and they still know Him) Him," and **does** not keep (present tense - as their general practice - not perfection but general direction) His commandments, is (present tense) a **liar** (peustes), and the truth is (present tense) not (the Greek indicates absolute negation) in him (1Jn 2:4)

Question: Beloved, does this sound like the description of a believer who is simply not experiencing fellowship with Jesus? Or is this the description of someone who claims to know Jesus but does not really know Him? Sure they may *know about* Jesus (that would apply to most people in America), but they *don't really know* Him *intimately*. They know about Jesus like someone knows about Abraham Lincoln but does not really know him by personal acquaintance. And beloved, one's soul will not be saved by just knowing about Christ. The only saving knowledge is to know Him by trusting in Him as Lord and Savior (Ro 10:9, 10-note, compare the dreadful fate of those who think they know Him in Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22, 23-note. Note that Jesus also uses the same verb [ginosko] that this individual does in 1Jn 2:4 for "know" - know by experience! Can you imagine the horror of those who claimed to "know" Jesus in their life, only to hear His solemn words "I never [ever] knew [ginosko] you depart from me, you who practice [present tense = habitually practice] lawlessness.")

Notice once again that John associates what this person **says** with what he actually **does**. John seems intent on getting across the point that you can **say** you are a Christian "until you're blue in the face" (to use an old expression which emphasizes one's persistence in making this claim), but unless there is evidence in your life by what you **do** or how you behave (in this case keep the the Lord's commandments - not perfection, but direction!), then John says you are a liar! That is strong language. If John walked up to someone and told them they were a liar, that would (or at least should) be cause for serious concern, especially in light of what John teaches about all liars who practice lying in the Revelation of Jesus Christ (see below).

Later in chapter 2 John asks...

Who is the **liar** but the one who denies (present tense) that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah)? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. (1John 2:22)

Comment: Anyone who denies that Jesus is the promised Messiah is an antichrist, one who opposes Christ!

In chapter 4 John again addresses the issue of lying stating plainly that...

If someone says, "I love (present tense - continually love) God," and hates (present tense - continually hates) his brother, he is (present tense) a **liar**; for the one who does not love (present tense) his brother whom he has seen, cannot (absolutely cannot) love God Whom he has not seen. (1John 4:20)

Comment: Once again note John's pattern of comparing **what one says** with **what one does** as their general practice, their general lifestyle. Read that verse again -- does that sound like a believer?

The Apostle John links **lying** and **practicing** twice in the Revelation in his description of the moral characteristics of those who will not be allowed into heaven! Perhaps this John wanted to make sure the readers of his epistle were not deceived by their lifestyle of lying and not practicing the truth (1Jn 1:6b)!

(John speaking of heaven) and nothing unclean and no one who **practices** (poieo in the present tense) abomination and **lying** (pseudos = noun), shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's **Book of Life**. (Rev 21:27-note)

(John repeats practicing lying!) Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves (present tense) and **practices** (poieo in the present tense) **lying** (pseudos = noun). (Rev 22:15-note)

Comment: In Revelation John clearly states that all who continually, habitually, as their general bent of life, as their lifestyle, as the general direction of their life PRACTICE LYING will die an eternal death! First John describes those who walk in the darkness as those in whom lying is their lifestyle! Remember that Scripture is the best commentary on Scripture! Not to mention that these Scriptures are all penned by the same author!

What is your conclusion? Is John describing believers in First John 1:6b?

John also mentions **lying** again in Revelation 21 linking it with the liar's eternal destiny...

But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and **all liars** (pseudos = adjective) (their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the **second death**). (Rev 21:8-note)

Tony Garland comments: Jesus told the Pharisees, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do... there is **no truth** in him. When he speaks a **lie**, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a **liar** and the **father of lies**" (John 8:44). The coming of the lawless one, the Antichrist, was with all power, signs and **lying** wonders (2Th 2:9). **Those who continue to lie will ultimately fall prey themselves to lies: they will not come to the truth!** (Read 2Th. 2:11, 12). Eventually, their own conscience becomes seared (1Ti. 4:2). All who reject salvation are ultimately liars: "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?" (1Jn 2:22). The truth of God has been made known to men through general revelation, but men **actively** (active voice = and continually = present tense) **suppress the truth** (lie) in unrighteousness. Knowing the truth, they promote false ideas such as God doesn't exist or that His existence cannot be known (Ro 1:18-note).

In summary, these passages from the pen of John strongly support the premise that lying is a very serious, "life or death" issue that clearly can impact one's eternal destiny! Thus when John says that when we walk in the darkness as our lifestyle, we are in effect practicing lying, that should be a cause of serious concern and deep soul searching. In my opinion, that hardly sounds like the description of a genuine believer! Sure all believers are guilty from time to time of "little white lies" (a misnomer, because all sin is triple A rated [Sin = AAA = Absolute Abhorrent Abomination] in the presence of the "**God [Who] is light**" and in Whom there is no darkness at all). Genuine believers do not continually lie as their lifestyle.

THE TRUTH ABOUT NOT PRACTICING THE TRUTH

Do not practice the truth - "**Not**" is the Greek word "**ou**" which signifies absolute negation. John is saying that when one walks habitually in darkness, they *absolutely* do not practice the truth. There is no middle ground. You either do or you don't practice the truth. Don't be deceived! Yes, all believers have times when they do not *do the truth*, but that is not their habitual practice or lifestyle. Believers are new creatures in Christ (2Cor 5:17), and have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light and now have a new desires and a new power to carry out those desires. Believers don't do the truth perfectly, but they do practice the truth as the general direction of their life (toward heaven, not hell!) As I like to say, we are speaking of *direction*, not *perfection*. If someone's life is continually in the darkness, then how can they possibly claim to have fellowship with "God (Who) is light" (1Jn 1:5)? Such a claim is preposterous, and anyone who believes that they can live like the devil and be assured of living eternally with Jesus is simply deceiving themselves. They have bought into the lie that John is addressing in this epistle, the lie that

says you can live anyway you want to live and still think you are an authentic, born again, regenerate person, who has Christ in them, who has His Holy Spirit indwelling them (cp 2Cor 13:14, Php 2:1), and yet who continually lives an unholy life. John wants to counter this dangerous deception, which is why he is writing these statements about those who say one thing and do another (1John 5:13).

Using a basic rule of good hermeneutics that Scripture is the best commentary on Scripture, it is notable that the only other use of the phrase "**practice truth**" is by the apostle John in his Gospel in a passage which is clearly in the context of salvation (See Jesus' teaching on belief and salvation in John 3:16, 17, 18, 19). John records the words of our Lord Jesus Christ...

For everyone who does (prasso in present tense = continually practices) evil hates (present tense) the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices (poieo in present tense = continually does) the truth comes (present tense) to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God. (John 3:20-21)

Comment: One who habitually (the text does not say "perfectly") or generally practices the truth is regenerate (born again), their deeds clearly manifesting (revealing for all to see) what they are in their heart (cp Ezekiel 36:36, 37). First John 1:6 states that a person who habitually walks in the darkness also does not practice truth as their lifestyle. Comparing this person with John's definition of a believer using almost identical wording, it is very reasonable to interpret those who "do not practice the truth" as unregenerate individuals.

Harris agrees commenting: The phrase **practicing the truth** means living out the truth in a lifestyle obedient to God. The most important parallel is John 3:20, 21, where we are told *"Everyone who does [= practices] evil hates the light and does not come to the light...but the one who practices the truth comes to the light, so that it may be plainly evident that his deeds have been done in God."* The problem with the opponents lies not with their boast that they have fellowship with God, but with their contradictory behavior—they continue walking in the darkness. ([1 John 1:5-22: Exegetical Commentary](#))

Practice ([4160](#)) (**poieo**) means to do or to accomplish and is in the **present tense** in this passage, indicating that this failure to practice truth is one's lifestyle or continual practice. In short, John is saying it does not matter **what you say you believe**, but **what you show you believe** by what you do, by how you live. If you say you believe and your life matches your lips then that is clearly a strong indication that your belief is genuine. John desires that his readers have **assurance of their salvation** (1John 5:13). On the other hand he wants to make sure that anyone who calls themselves a Christian and lives like the devil (a liar from the beginning) is not deceived into thinking they are just out of fellowship. John clearly believes habitual liars are not just out of fellowship, but out of the presence of the God of light for all eternity! Serious consequences call for strong language, and John is up to the task.

Note that John is not saying that if you are not sinless, you are not a Christian. He makes that point very clear in 1John 1:8. But the point and proof of the Gospel is that Christians while not *sinless*, do "**sin less**" and if they do not practice this truth, they have reason to question whether they have truly been born again.

As **Wiersbe** says this person "is playing a role and acting a part, but is not living a genuine life. He is insincere." And I would add, he or she is unregenerate.

Brooke says it this way...

"Speaking" the truth is only one part of *"doing"* the truth, and not the most important. To *"do the truth"* is to give expression to the highest of which he is capable in every sphere of his being. It relates to action, and conduct and feeling, as well as to word and thought. ([A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles](#))

The truth - The definitive article identifies this as not just truth in general but in context is "the specific truth" about how a believer should walk. Truth is like a beacon of light which shines on our lies and exposes the darkness of our souls. **Vine** adds:

The truth is not merely a creed. It is always that which has a bearing upon the life. The truth is doctrine "according to God" that is, it is consistent with His character. Right action is an expression of the truth, and those who walk according to the truth thereby express the character of God. Hence the contrast in the next verse (1Jn 1:7).

Truth ([225](#))(**aletheia** from **a** = indicates following word has the opposite meaning ~ without + **lanthano** = to be hidden or concealed, to escape notice, cp our English "*latent*" from Latin = to lie hidden) has the literal sense of that which contains nothing hidden, that which is not concealed. **Aletheia** is that which that is seen or expressed as it really is.

The basic understanding of **aletheia** is that it is the **manifestation** of a **hidden** reality. For example, when you are a witness in a trial, the court attendant says "Raise your right hand. Do you swear that you will tell the truth and nothing but the truth so help you

God?" And you say, "I do" and you sit down. The question the court attendant is asking is "Are you willing to come into this courtroom and **manifest** something that is **hidden** to us that only you know so that you will bear evidence to that?" Therefore when you speak the **truth**, you are manifesting a "**hidden reality**". Does that make sense? A parallel example in Scripture is the case of the woman in the crowd who had touched Jesus (Read context = Mk 5:24-25, 26-27, 28-29, 30, 31-32), but when she became "aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth " (Mk 5:33) and nothing but the truth. She did not lie. She spoke no falsehoods.

Truth then is the correspondence between a **reality** and a declaration which professes to set forth or describe the **reality**. To say it another way, **words spoken or written** are **true** when they correspond with **objective reality**. Persons and things are **true** when they correspond with their profession (which we describe with words like integrity, sincerity, non-hypocritical, etc). In other words, "what you see is what you get".

Marshall says that...

the **truth** is the ultimate reality of God revealed in Jesus and in the Christian message, and that this reality is moral in quality. To practice the truth means to live according to the way revealed by God and so as those who belong to the divine sphere. John says that those who practice sin demonstrate that they do not belong to God; in other words, they do not have fellowship with God. (The Epistles of John - The New International Commentary on the New Testament)

Peter Barnes writes that...

John is saying that because God is holy, his people must be committed to holy living. A person who claims to know God but who walks in darkness is lying and not carrying out the truth. He may believe in Jesus as Lord, he may preach and prophesy in his name, he may perform miracles and cast out demons—but if he practises lawlessness he is damned as one whom Christ never knew (Matt. 7:21–23). If we are not slaves of righteousness, we are slaves of sin (Ro 6:15–18). Without holiness (or sanctification), no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). The evangelist may tell the unholy believer that he is safe, but Christ says that he is not (In Mt 7:21-23). (Barnes, Peter, Knowing Where We Stand: The Message of John's Epistles-Welwyn Commentary Series)

Paul Apple summarizes John's teaching (and his warning) in this verse...

Walking in Darkness Invalidates Any Assurance of Fellowship - Remember the false teaching of the Gnostics who believed in dualism = separation of body and spirit; they were teaching that spiritual communion with God is independent of physical morality = your walk says nothing about your relationship with God

1. Failure to Be Real -- Hypocrisy (or Self-Deceit) = "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness" This would be walking in a sphere where the light of God is inoperative

2. Failure to Be True

a. In Word = "we lie"

b. In Deed = "and do not practice the truth" - cf practical emphasis of Book of James

If we verbalize that we are sharing in God's life but **our lifestyle** is characterized by the world's attitude of indifference to moral principles, then we are not what we profess to be and are not living according to the Word:

- no conviction of sin is present / no fear of God
- no God-oriented desire to obey and please God
- no orientation of life around Biblical absolutes

If we are living a lie, what type of assurance of salvation should we have? ([1 John Devotional Commentary](#))

Warren Wiersbe discusses the prototypical human liar, Cain, noting that...

Cain was a **child of the devil** (1Jn 3:12), which means he was a **murderer** and a **liar** (Jn 8:44). He **lied** to his brother when he enticed him to the place where he killed him. He **lied** to himself in thinking that he could do such an evil deed and get away with it. Cain even **tried to lie** to God and cover up his wicked deeds! (Be Basic)

Celebrate the Man - A survey of visitors at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, revealed that many of the park's guests under the age of 15 didn't know that Walt Disney was a real person. They thought that "Disney" was just a company name. When corporate officials planned the celebrations commemorating the 100th anniversary of Walt Disney's birth, they made a special effort to

highlight the life and impact of the real man.

With Christmas still a few weeks away, it's not too early to ponder how we can celebrate the Savior's birth in a way that helps others know that Jesus lived on this earth as a real man. What can we do to communicate that a baby born in Bethlehem was the one and only Son of God who gave His life to save us from sin?

The apostle John, a companion of Jesus, taught that to live as a forgiven, transformed person is the best testimony we can give that Jesus was truly the Son of God, a real person. He wrote, "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" (1Jn 1:7). And "He who loves his brother abides in the light" (1Jn 2:10).

More than the gifts we give, it is how we live that will point to the reality of Christ this Christmas. — by David C. McCasland [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Putting It Into Practice

What does it mean to "walk in the light"?

Review these verses for insight: Ephesians 5:8-10;

Colossians 3:12-15; James 3:17; 1 Peter 1:15-16.

**Does your life shed light
or cast shadows?**