



# Finer Grounds Bible Study

## 1, 2, & 3 John

### Lesson 3: 1 John 2: 1-6

#### Read 1 John 2:1-6

John points out that he is writing the things in this letter so that they do not sin (v.1). This is an important thing for us to reflect upon, because it shows us that sin is a choice. John writes, “and if any man sin”. Once we have become Christians, we must make the daily decision to choose Christ over our temptations—while we may be tempted to sin, we choose not to. Sin isn’t something that just happens to us—it’s a choice, and as Christians, we choose self-control over sin.

While we may indeed fall back into sin by giving into our temptations, sin is a choice. Every single time. We need to consider ourselves dead to our old lives and dead to sin (Romans 6:11-12), because we can’t “continue in sin” and still expect His grace to cover us (Romans 6:1-4). Instead of seeing our failings as inevitable, we need to see ourselves as having the ability to overcome sin through Christ, because He is greater than any sin or temptation we face. When we say we have no choice but to sin, we are in fact saying that Satan, outside of us, is stronger than the God living inside of us (1 John 4:4). Our God is stronger than we give Him credit for sometimes—He is strong enough to forgive us, yes—but He is also strong enough to deliver us out of temptation, so that we do not sin in the first place (2 Peter 2:9).

We’re going to bring up this truth in more depth later, but I want to introduce it now, so that you will hopefully become comfortable with a truth that we are often uncomfortable with: we

are not sinners. Saved, in the blood of Christ, we cannot be sinners. We are “saved to the uttermost” (Hebrews 7:25) and have a perfect advocate for every sin we fall into. We are not sinners, children of God. Yes, we may sometimes sin, but that does not make us sinners. A sinner is someone who makes a practice of sinning, and that is not what children of God do. Don’t be deceived.

As confusing as some want to make it, there are 3 Simple Steps to enjoying continual cleansing in Christ that John has already laid out in this epistle:

- Knowing God’s commandments
- Walking after Christ’s example
- Asking for forgiveness when you fail

If we do these things, we are righteous—and not sinners. “Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous” (1 John 3:7)

Notice also how he calls them his “little children”. John is an elderly man at this time, so he probably feels like his audience are his children in the faith. What this also illustrates to us is the gentleness that admonishment and rebuke must come with.

**Consider this quote: “Sin is not a mystery, and neither is what is expected of us. Instead of thinking, “I am a sinner” start to think, “is there anything I’ve actually done to transgress against the Lord?”—Patrick Swayne**



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**Do you find people act like sin is a mystery sometimes? Do we?**

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Sometimes we do when we fail to bring specific sins to the Father (“forgive me for sin” rather than stating what sins we’ve actually committed)—or when we act like sin is just something that happens to us, rather than something we choose to do.

It is important that you change your mind about sin. Instead of thinking it an unavoidable, mysterious part of life, start to think of ways to proactively avoid sin—instead of simply waiting for it to happen and then asking for forgiveness.

**Write down some specific things you struggle with, and ask yourself these questions:**

- **What do I struggle with? What are my temptations? (James 1:14)**

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- **In what situations do I feel especially tempted?**

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- **What could I do to avoid these situations in the future?**

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- **Is there anyone I know who has gone through this struggle and won that I can ask advice from?**

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- **What kind of support do I need to help me to break the cycle of sin?**

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- **What kind of accountability do I need to find?**

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- **Find verses that talk about the solution to your particular struggles and meditate on them.**

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## Read 1 John 2:1-2

Of course, even though we have the choice to sin or not to sin—and even though we decide to put our old life behind us—this doesn’t mean that we are immune to ever sinning again. That is why there is a provision for if we sin—Jesus Christ, the perfect advocate and sacrifice for all our past, present, and future sins (v.1-2). The only one that walked perfectly was Jesus.

In the previous verses we saw the steps we need to take to achieve ongoing forgiveness of sins, here we see how Jesus is the one that allows us to enjoy continual cleansing. He has sacrificed Himself to make a way (1 Peter 1:18, 19)—and if



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we do our part, He will continue to make that way clear by being an advocate (go-between; one who pleads our case) between us and God when we go to Him in confession (Hebrews 4:15, 16). He has paved the way with His blood—and pledges to walk with us every step of the way. All we have to do is choose to walk in the light of His example.

**How does remembering that your sins have a price change your attitude towards sin?**

**Consider Hebrews 10:26, 29**

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Next time you pray to God, really reflect on the fact that you have an advocate who completely understands every struggle you go through and pray according—pour out your heart to God, knowing He cares and knowing that Jesus is pleading for you, taking into account all your weaknesses.

**Write a prayer, specifically thanking God for giving Jesus as a perfect example, sacrifice, and advocate.**

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**Read 1 John 2:3-5**

We can have confidence that we know Jesus if we are keeping His commandments (vv.3-5). We can have confidence in our salvation, because sin is no mystery (v.1; 3:4) and neither is our salvation (v.3-4). Despite the confusion in the religious world today, we can know when we sin and we can know when we are following His commandments. “We know that we know” is an

emphatic statement—we can know absolutely, without a shadow of a doubt—a statement of complete confidence.

This knowledge of Jesus isn’t merely a head knowledge—it’s an active belief. It’s more than just believing that He exists—it’s a deeply held belief in Who He is and what He can do for us that changes the way we live on a daily basis. To truly know Him is to love Him, and to love Him, we must allow His Word to change our lives. In fact, if we say we know Him and don’t keep His commandments, we are lying (v.4) and will find ourselves in the situation where He will say to us, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness” (Matthew 7:23).

This was an important message for the audience John was writing to in the 1st century, as they wrestled with the false teaching. The Gnostics believed in a God that revealed different or higher truths to certain individuals. Does this sound familiar? This is an incredibly relevant message for us today, too. In a cultural climate where truth is relative and highly individual, we battle the same kinds of errors this audience faced. Have you heard these kinds of statements?

- That may be the Spirit’s truth for you, but it isn’t the Spirit’s truth for me.
- How you feel about an idea reveals what God’s truth is to you.
- I just don’t think Jesus would have asked that of us.
- Everything else is relative and open to interpretation.

This may all sound easy and good—but it is completely contrary to God’s character. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).



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To say that we can't understand the Bible alike is to disrespect God and His ability to communicate. He wants "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4)—why would He make it difficult to understand? He not only wants all men to be saved, but He wants them to be saved in the same way. He is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). To say He reveals one truth by speaking to me, but He hasn't spoken that way to you shows a misunderstanding of the way God works and even of His very nature. This is just one more evidence that the character of Christ is still under attack today.

We can all have confidence in knowing Christ, and all in the same way. Through Him we can all know with complete confidence:

- What the Scriptures say and what He requires of us
- What Christianity should look like
- That we can follow His commands
- That He hears and understands our cries and pleas with perfect sympathy (Hebrews 4:15-16)
- That we are saved through His sacrifice

We don't have to guess. We don't have to doubt. We can state, just like Paul did, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day" (2 Timothy 4:7, 8). This is not a prideful thing to say—because it is not we, but God that causes us to win the victory. When we express confidence, we are expressing confidence in God—we know He has communicated His Word

clearly and we trust that He will do just as He has promised.

Consider the statement: "In him is the love of God perfected". John says this is evidence that we know God, "By this we may know that we are in him" (1 John 2:5). This could mean two things, either, 1) God's love is shown, or 2) We show God's love. Both of these statements are true—when we follow God's commandments, we become manifestations of God's love, we abide in the perfect love of God, and God shows His love to be faithful. This is just as Jesus promised, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (John 15:10).

**Consider the fact that we can know Him and we can know His commandments.**

- **What confidence does this give you?**

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- **What responsibilities does this give you?**

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**Many say that we can't truly know what God expects of us, or what He commands in His word.**

- **If this were true, what would this mean for us and our salvation?**

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- **Could we have confidence if we couldn't know His commandments?**

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- **Consider the opposing thoughts in verses 4 and 5. What do they tell you about the importance of keeping God's commandments?**

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## Read 1 John 2:6

If we want to be in Christ, we need to follow the example He laid out for us while on this earth. If we claim to “live for Jesus” and “live in Him”, we must be walking as He walked (v.6) or we are liars (v.4). Christ is our perfect example of how to live and while we can never be sinlessly perfect like He was, we can be what we need to be—we can live Christ-centered lives where we do our best to avoid sin and turn back to Him every time we fall. We can follow Him—because if God says we ought to, then we can. And we better believe it.

*“And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure” (1 John 3:3)*

*“You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (perfect = complete, mature; Matthew 5:48)*

Jesus never asks us to do anything that He Himself didn't do—next time you are considering a course of action, reflect upon Jesus' example and ask yourself what He would do in that situation.

**What are some things Jesus' has already done that He now commands us to do? Think of at least 5.**

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**Often, we think of Jesus' example as unattainable—but instead we need to think of it like Paul did—and continually search for ways to “fill in the gap” between us and Christ.**

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## Consider Colossians 1:24 and Philippians 3:13-4

- **What are some ways you think you could sacrifice more for the cause of Christ?**

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- **Is there anything in your life you can identify as getting in the way of you maturing in your Christian walk? How can you improve in that area?**

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