

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN

UPSIDE

A STUDY IN THE EPISTLE OF I JOHN

DOWN

WORLD

Christ

Baptist

Church

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Lesson 3

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD



What would be the consequence of flipping the North and South poles?

- ▶ Earth's protective magnetic field would be weakened by up to 90% during a polar flip.
- ▶ Harmful space radiation would damage cells, causing cancer, and frying electronic circuits and grids

- ▶ This could also disrupt the internal compass in animals who use the field for navigation
- ▶ Even more extreme, it could make certain places on the planet too dangerous to live

Did you know that Earth has two North Poles? There's the geographic North Pole, which **never changes**; and there's the magnetic North Pole, which is **always on the move**.

- And right now, the magnetic pole is moving faster than usual.

Over the past 150 years, the magnetic North Pole has casually wandered 685 miles across northern Canada. **But now, it's racing 25 miles a year to the northwest.**

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

Scientists report they have already seen a glimpse polarity shift in an area called the South Atlantic Anomaly (where the earth's inner radiation belt is closest to the surface).

- Thus, they surmise that a portion of magnetic field deep in the earth has already flipped

As a result, the Hubble Space Telescope and other satellites often shut down their sensitive electronics as they pass over the area.

And astronauts on the International Space Station reported seeing a higher number of bright flashes of light in their vision, thought to be caused by high-energy cosmic rays that the weaker field can't hold back.

This could be a sign that we're about to experience something humans have never seen before: a magnetic polar flip.

And when this happens, it could affect much more than just your compass.

[\[https://www.businessinsider.com/earth-north-south-poles-flip-magnetic-field-2018-4\]](https://www.businessinsider.com/earth-north-south-poles-flip-magnetic-field-2018-4)

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

WORLD (cosmos) MEANS ORDER – PARTICULARLY AS GOD HAS DESIGNED!

Despite all the struggles we have in life, our struggle is not hopeless, for alliance with the Person of Christ yields the proper fruit of righteous living

In an Upside-Down world, the rhythms of life are out of sync and man's pulsations of passion are distorted so much, he cannot find peace from boredom, contentment to overcome grief, tranquility to assuage anxiety and depression, and enough gratitude to refocus his attention from self to the Savior

Because of his shallow relationship with God, man is not resilient enough nor does he inherently have the capacity to bounce back from every-thingness and nothingness.

- How can one bounce back when he can't shoulder the load every day feels so heavy?
- If you're near enough to the Savior, you can cast all these cares on Him (Matt. 11:28)

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

- ❑ **Matt. 11:28-30** “Are you weary, carrying a heavy burden? Then come to me. I will refresh your life, for I am your oasis. ²⁹Simply join your life with mine. Learn my ways and you’ll discover that I’m gentle, humble, easy to please. You will find refreshment and rest in me. ³⁰For all that I require of you will be pleasant and easy to bear.”(TPT)
- ❑ There are no words that can compare to this invitation – not just the **refreshing tone**, nor **sweetness of calling** in His voice, but moreover **the content is soothing**.
- ❑ The proposition is intended to speak to **all the wretchedness of man** – active and passive
 - a) **Come hither to me** – You must make the first step before I can take over
 - b) **Take my yoke upon you**—as you place yourself under my subjection
 - c) **Learn of me** – you will know me once you come into fellowship with Me
 - d) **Your soul needs rest** – your body is making do, but the duress is on your soul
 - e) **I will lighten your carry quotient**— my yoke is easy and my burden is light

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

John Piper gets to the heart of weariness under the load of life:

“Sometimes we can point to a significant factor, but often we can’t. Our weariness results from the cumulative, multilayered intersections of life’s complexities, bodily frailties, emotional heartbreaks, and the consequences of sin. It surpasses understanding.”

[<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/come-all-who-are-weary>]

On you tube there is a man known as the “Backwards Dude” (John Sevier Austin) whose major claim to fame is the ability to speak and record words backwards and when the video is reversed his words come out forward!

- This “dude” can also read backwards and even sing backwards.
- He learned about his reverse speech as a kid and it all made sense when recently he learned that he has high functioning autism (<https://youtu.be/qNfzGuOSPTE>)

Apostle John is very up-front and simple in his presentation of the **fellowship story** – there is no trickery (*trickery; deception*) in the message of the text.

- There is no flim-flam, con sales pitch or clever gibberish, just plain talk

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

I John 1:3-4 “... that which we (apostles) **have seen** and **heard** we declare to you, that **you also may have fellowship with us**; and truly **our fellowship is** with the **Father** and with **His Son** Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things we write to you that **your joy may be full**.

The **basis for fellowship** as **Christians** is the line of demarcation separating the **readers of I John** from **those who had withdrawn from the community**.

- The object of the fellowship is He Who **was** from the beginning (John 1:1; I John 1:1)
- His disciples had **seen Him, heard Him** and **handled Him** (V 1)
- This One John refers to was was not just a manifestation seen with the eyes like many Greek gods but was **fully human** and he could prove it
- He was the Word of Life (zōē) and Word (Logos) Who is life (dzo-ay’—absolute fullness of life)

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

In John 8:12, Jesus said I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

- Previously Jesus had told His disciples in Matthew 5:14 “You are the light of the world”

Further, in Jewish literature the title “**light of the world**,” applied to Israel, Jerusalem, the patriarchs, the menorah, the Messiah, Temple, God, famous rabbis and the law (John 1:4-5)

- But it always referred to something of significance, value, wisdom, goodness and holiness

Now it is important to know that in John 8, Jesus made this statement in connection with the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth/Sukkoth—John 7:2, 37).

The Feast of Tabernacles is the general harvest festival and the anniversary of the beginnings of the **wanderings in the wilderness** (Exd. 23:16; Lev. 23:33; Deut. 16:13-15).

- Wilderness has a wide range of applications and different words are employed

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

a) A land not suited for farming because it was too dry, rough and rocky

b) A land that was sufficient for grazing (Gen 14:6; Exd. 3:18)

c) Occasionally the word wilderness means "desert" (Matt. 3:1 Luke 3:2-4)

d) Jesus was taken by the Spirit into the wilderness when He was tempted (Matt. 4; Mark 1)

- Succoth, along with Hanukkah (John 10:22) was known for splendid lighting.
- And at this spectacular celebration, they lit up the city with torches

The fact that Jesus offers His light to the whole world (nations), suggest an connection to **Isaiah 42:6** "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles (gôy)"

- Anyone not in fellowship with Jesus is "walking in darkness" (John 9:4; John 11:9)
- This is a natural metaphor for **stumbling** (Isa. 59:10; Jer. 13:16), **falling from the right way** (Jer. 18:15; Mal. 2:8) or **being destroyed** (Psl. 27:2; Jer. 20:11).

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

So in I John 1:5-7, John advances the idea of what it means to be in fellowship with Jesus: “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that **God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.** ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, **we lie and do not practice the truth.** ⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Other Jewish texts (especially the Dead Sea Scrolls) also used the light-darkness image to contrast the followers of righteousness with those of sin, regarding God as wholly righteous. The OT also affirmed that God was wholly righteous (Psl. 92:15) [Bible Background Commentary - The IVP Bible Background Commentary – New Testament]

As we stated before, I John chapters 1 and 2 deal with fellowship with God and chapters 3-5 encapsulates what it means to be a son of God

- And in the fellowship chapters, John gives us three tests of true fellowship

[▶ Obedience-1:5-2:6](#)

[▶ Love – 2:7-17](#)

[▶ Truth – 2:18-29](#)

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(1) The Test of Obedience (1:5–2:6)

- The image of light representing God (John 1:4) – and Satan is the prince of darkness (Luke 22:53), indicates that walking with God is light and disobeying Him is darkness
- Therefore, fellowship is a matter of **light and darkness**; and sonship is a matter of life and death (3:4; 5:11–12).
- It is possible for people to say they are in the light, yet actually live in darkness.
- So John present four liars in his epistle: (a) lying about **fellowship**, 1:6–7 (b) lying about our **nature** (*I have no sin*) 1:8 (3) lying about our **deeds**, saying we have not sinned, 1:10; and (4) lying about our **obedience**, saying that we have kept His commandments when we have not, 2:4–6.
- Christians do sin, but this does not mean they must be saved all over again.
- Sin in the life of the believer breaks the fellowship but does not destroy the sonship.
- God provides for the sins of the saints through the heavenly ministry of Christ.

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

- We are saved from the **penalty of sin [justification]** by Jesus death (Rom. 5:6–9), and are saved daily from the **power of sin [sanctification]** by His life (Rom. 5:10) and one day we will be saved from the **presence of sin [glorification]** by His return (I John 3:2)
- Our fellowship with Jesus results in His being our heavenly “advocate” (2:1) means “one who pleads a case” and is the same Gk. word as “Comforter” in John 14:16.
 - ❑ **Paraklētos – intercessor; consoler** – one who pleads another cause before a judge
 - ❑ The **Spirit represents Christ to us** on earth, and the **Son represents us to God** in heaven.
 - ❑ His wounds testify that He died for us, and therefore God can forgive when we confess (homologeō – say the same thing) our sins (I John 1:9; Rom. 8:31-34)
 - ❑ As believers in Christ, we do not do penance, make sacrifices, or punish ourselves when we have sinned; because every sin has already been taken care of at the cross.

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

(2) The Test of Love (2:7–17)-- Unless we love God and His children, we cannot walk in the light and fellowship with God.

- Due to our fellowship with God in Christ, we experience newness (II Cor. 5:17)

A. The new commandment (V. 7–11) -- When we are in fellowship with God, walking in the light, we also walk in love (John 13:34)

It is a basic truth when Christians are out of fellowship with God, they cannot get along with God's people.

We are all members of God's family, so we ought to love one another (Lev. 19:18)

This was even an "old commandment" back in the days of Moses (ibid).

B. The new family (V. 12–14) -- John makes a paternal declaration, calling the saints "little children"; for all of God's children have been forgiven.

Nevertheless, we ought to grow in the Lord, becoming stronger men and women in the faith and ultimately spiritual "fathers and mothers."

C. The new danger (V. 15–17) -- There is conflict between love for the Father and love for the world.

By "the world" John means all that belongs to this life that is opposed to Christ

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

- ❑ It is Satan's system, society opposed to God and taking the place of God.
- ❑ Anything in our lives that **dulls our love for spiritual things** or that makes it easy for us to sin is worldly and must be put away.
- ❑ The Mother of Charles and John Wesley wrote in a letter to John in 1725 and as she is warning about "besetting sin" (Heb. 12:1) she says:
"Whatever weakens **your** reason, **impairs the tenderness of your conscience**, obscures **your** sense of God, takes off **your** relish for spiritual things, whatever increases the **authority of the body over the mind**, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may seem in itself."
- ❑ John mentions three specific problems: the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life.
- ❑ Is this not what worldly people strive for? Ironically it is what Jesus was tempted with in the wilderness (world – Matt. 4) – **hedonism** (stones bread), **materialism** (position/wealth), and **egoism** (throw yourself over)

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

- ❑ Saints, living for the world means losing everything in time, because the world is **passing away** – it is transient and **not eternal** (Matt. 24:35)
- ❑ If we love the world, we lose the love of the Father and cease to do His will.

(3) **The Test of Truth (2:18–29)** -- God reveals Himself to us in His Word, which is the Truth (John 17:17); therefore, **we can't believe lies and see God nor have fellowship with Him.**

- John warns about the antichristianism that existed at the time of his writing and tells us how to recognize those who practice it:
 - (1) they have left (exerchomai= **depart out of**) the fellowship of the truth, v. 19
 - (2) they **deny Jesus Christ is the Son of God** come in the flesh, v. 22
 - (3) they **try to proselytize believers** to come over to their way of thinking (v. 26)
- John stands in agreement with Peter describes (II Peter 2), that these false teachers once were in the church, but departed from the truth they professed to believe.
- The Spirit's role is He is our heavenly unction (2:20 --anointing) who teaches us the truth.

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

- The Spirit of God uses the inspired Word of God to communicate God's truth to us.
- V. 27 should not be taken to mean that Christians do not need for pastors and teachers, otherwise Eph. 4:8–16 would not be in the NT.
- Rather, he is saying that believers must be Spirit-taught personally through the Word and should not always depend on human teachers.
- The Christian in fellowship with God will gain some understanding because of his/her fellowship with God and the prevailing presence of the Spirit of God as we read and understand the Bible and be taught by the Spirit.
- In V 28–29, John suggests that false doctrine and false living go together.
- If we believe the truth with our hearts and commit ourselves to it, then we will live holy lives before men.
- Of course, one of the greatest incentives to holy living is the imminent coming of Jesus Christ. How tragic that some Christians who have not been abiding (fellowshipping) with Christ will be ashamed when He returns.

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

So, the central lesson of I John 1 & 2 is if Christians desire to have fellowship with Christ, they must **obey the Word, love the people of God's, and believe the truth.**

Whenever sin enters, it will be because of a failure to comply with one, if not all three of these principles and when entanglement occurs, the Christian must immediately confess it and claim God's forgiveness.

Worldliness hinders us from spending time in the Word, learning Divine truths and giving access for those truths to take hold in our inner man.

Or, to look at it negatively, the Christian who **deliberately disobeys or neglects the Word**, will be one who cannot get along with God's people due his disfellowship with God.

The privilege of fellowship appropriates Christ as the **"Propitiation"** (hilasmos -- 2:2 and 4:10) for our sins – which includes both expiation and atonement.

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