

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN

UPSIDE

A STUDY IN THE EPISTLE OF I JOHN

DOWN

WORLD

Christ

Baptist

Church

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Lesson 4

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

If a system, entity or way of life is turned upside down, it is changed completely, making people confused or upset.

To turn upside-down is called **inversion**, which has a different meaning in various spheres:

- In grammar it is a reversal of word order – *the ocean blue—never have we – hardly had I*
- In music it is the process or result of changing or reversing the relative positions of the notes of a musical interval, chord, or phrase
- In biology it is the breaking off of a chromosome section and its subsequent reattachment in an inverted position
- In mathematics it is a change in the order of the terms of a mathematical proportion effected by inverting each ratio
- In business it is a reorganization in corporate merges when an US company acquires a foreign corporation and restructures as a newly created multinational company
- [<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inversion>]

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There is one more manner in which the term inversion is used and that is in meteorology (*science concerned with the processes of the atmosphere*).

For those of us who are meteorologically challenged, a temperature inversion is “a deviation from the normal change of an atmospheric property with altitude.” In other words, the weather “gets stuck” [<https://brainly.in/question/15541879>]

- This kind of inversion is a reminder of those times when our walk with Christ “gets stuck.”
 - Life doesn’t seem to move in any direction and there is loss of momentum.
 - People become lackluster and somber, resigning themselves to a life of lethargy
 - Yes, we can say the thrill is gone – and lets pray its not gone away for good
- **Rev. 2:2-4** I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; ³ and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. ⁴ Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.

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There arises a drabness to faith -- A sense of resignation — been there, done that — no matter what anyone says or does.

Jesus admonished the Church at Ephesus to reignite the misplaced fire, regain their spiritual momentum of their earlier days of faith.

- How you ask -- it's through spiritual inversion – The remedy is in Rev. 2:5
 - 1.Remember** – call to mind those early days when the fruit of the Spirit flooded our souls (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22). We must acknowledge the need to go back. This is better known as “**retrospection.**”
 - 2.Repent** for a change in mind will lead to a change in direction. *‘As we have received Christ, so we are to walk in Him* (Col. 2:6). Jesus stated to this Church that required them to allow the Holy Spirit to have its rightful place (Rev. 2:7)

The direction of Jesus is a warning that the steps of withdrawal from God feeds our apathy to miss future engagements.

- We must advance from reading the Bible as a pre-nap exercise to an encounter with God

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Similarly, but in a different kind of way, the same thing happens when something is turned **inside out** – also classified as **eversion** (*being turned outward*)

- An ankle sprain is a form of eversion resulting in **mild swelling, limited range of motion, difficulty with bearing weight** and **severe and prolonged pain**

Living in an **inside out world**, we take on an obligation to **rise to others expectations** rather than conforming to the canonical command for Christocentric replication

- **Rom 8:29-30** “For he knew all about us before we were born and he destined us from the beginning to **share the likeness of his Son**. This means the Son is the oldest among a vast family of brothers and sisters **who will become just like him**.³⁰**Having determined our destiny ahead of time**, he called us to himself and transferred his perfect righteousness to everyone he called. And those who possess his perfect righteousness he co-glorified with his Son!” Similarly, but in a different kind of way, the same thing happens when something is turned **inside out** – also classified as **eversion** (*being turned outward*)

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Dr. Larry Crabb in his book *Inside Out* (1988) highlighted that, if one desires to have a more vital union with God, a richer relationship with others, and a deeper sense of personal wholeness, they must learn how to look inside themselves and discover how God brings about liberating change, when they live from the inside out.

Dr. Crabb in the book looks at everyone with a kind of wonder; noting that beneath behavior he sees wounds; and beneath wounds he sees depravity and beneath depravity he sees the gloriously volatile *imago dei*.

The journey toward recovery from a wounded existence to a uncovering of the image of God is one that is not for the faint of heart.

It requires humility, candid honesty and a sincere desire to rid oneself of the ugly sin of self-protection that's existed since that day in the Garden when Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the snake!

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Unfortunately, we find it easier to focus on the more obvious behavioral sins of adultery, addictions, fornication, lying, and stealing, than identify the “sins of the heart.”

These would be those acts where man operates out of self-interest rather than out of love for others, and therefore are far more difficult to pinpoint and are much easier to ignore.

Jesus admonished in **Matt. 23:26** “First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.”

- Dr. Warren Wiersbe classically contrasted Matt. 23 with Matt 5
 - There are a series of “woes” in **Matt. 23:13-29**, which stand in contrast a series of “blessed” (Beatitudes) of **Matt. 5:3–12**.

▪ The poor in spirit inherit the Kingdom (5:3)

▪ The proud shut up the Kingdom (23:13)

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▪ Mourners are comforted (5:4)

▪ The meek inherit earth (5:5)

▪ God fills those who are Hungry for holiness (5:6)

▪ The merciful obtain mercy (5:7)

▪ The pure in heart see God (5:8)

▪ Peace makers and the Persecuted are children of God (5:9-12)

▪ Devourers receive damnation (23:14)

▪ The proud send people To hell (23:15)

▪ Those greedy for material gain, Go away empty (23:16-22)

▪ Pharisees reject mercy (23:23-24)

▪ The outwardly religious are inwardly corrupt (23:25-28)

▪ Murderers and persecutors are called children of the devil (23:29-33)

[Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe's expository outlines of the NT* (pp. 83–84). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books]

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Jesus did not speak these “woes” in Matthew 23 with a feeling of hatred or malice in His heart, but rather with a sense of “pitying sorrow.”

- Behold the loving heart of Christ revealing the wicked hearts of His enemies.

The behavior of the enemies of the Christ “shut up the kingdom” (v13) by

- 1st by refusing to receive the message of John the Baptist (21:25–27; 11:16–19)
- 2nd by refusing to acknowledge Christ Himself (John 7:47).
- 3rd by keeping the true meaning of the Scriptures from the people (Luke 11:52).

So, Dr. Crabb is right, stating that an honest, often painful look inside ourselves is integral to resolving the sins of the heart because it is possible to correct what’s wrong in how we relate (behavior) to God through repentance without exhibiting self-protection.

That was the problem in Genesis 3 with our fore-parents Adam and Eve, who also possessed an inability to deal truthfully with life, and with themselves and their failure

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God created mankind, male and female create He them, to enjoy flawless and bountiful relationships, both with Him and each other.

- We need to accept there's a certain degree of pain that is necessary in this life

Since “fellowship” is a key theme of Chapters 1 & 2, John says that failed fellowship with God equates to failed fellowship with mankind

- **I John 2:8-11** “Again, a **new (*kainos*) commandment** I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the **darkness is passing away**, and the **true light is already shining**.⁹ He who says he is in the light, and **hates (*miseō*)** his brother, is in darkness until now.¹⁰ He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for **stumbling (*skandalon*)** in him.¹¹ But he who **hates** his brother is **in darkness** and **walks in darkness**, and **does not know where he is going**, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

➤ The *new commandment* finds its *truth* in its practical *realization* in the walk of Christians in union with Christ.

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The Psalmist says in Psalm 119:105: *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”*

- God’s Word is the light, therefore “to walk in the light” is to bring our lives into alignment with the Word of God – so much so that the Word becomes my life.
- John’s encouragement to “light walking” (i.e. fellowship) is found C 1:5–2:29
 - A. Being honest 1:5–2:2 C. Being separate 2:12-17
 - B. Being loving 2:3–11 D. Being alert 2:18-29

John’s general warning against the world is now followed by a specific warning against one of its end-time manifestations.

- The false teachers who were present were worldly to the core (I John 4:5).
- John’s readers knew about the predicted advent of **Antichrist** and they needed to be alerted to the appearance of **many** displaying his traits of hostility toward God’s Christ.
- This is a clear indication that history has entered a climactic era: **the last hour**.
- Despite the lapse of centuries since John wrote, the climax of all things impends in a special way. The stage has been set for history’s final drama.

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Admittedly, throughout history, many of the difficult challenges the Church has faced came from outside.

- But John suggests that the most dangerous have always been from within.

For from within surreptitiously false teachers who are peddlers of error and who masquerade as teachers of truth, are trusted and evolve from inside the Church.

- False teachers take on many forms, custom-crafted to times, cultures, and contexts.

John Piper lists seven false teachers from inside who carry out their deceptive tactics:

1. The Heretic is the most prominent and perhaps the most dangerous of the false teachers.

- Peter warned against him in his second epistle: **II Pet. 2:1** “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.”
- The Heretic is the person who teaches what blatantly contradicts an essential teaching of the Christian faith.

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- By his / her denial of true faith celebrating error, their followers are led from the safety of orthodoxy promoting **disunion** (*heresy --belief contrary to orthodox teaching*)
- **Titus 3:10** says, “A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject”
- **Jude 3** supports “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”

2. The Charlatan is only interested in the Christian faith to the extent that it can fill his wallet.

- This person uses Christianity as a means of personal enrichment.
- Paul in I Tim. 6:3-5 charged Timothy to be on guard against charlatans.
- The Charlatan uses his leadership position to benefit from others’ wealth.
- Acts 8:9-24 Simon Magus was such a man motivated by his love for wealth
- When Pope Leo X commissioned Tetzal to sell indulgences, the profits not only funded the reconstruction of St. Peter’s Basilica, but also his luxurious lifestyle.
- In the 1990s, televangelist Robert Tilton brought in tens of millions of dollars each year by exploiting the vulnerable and gullible.
- Today Benny Hinn, Creflo Dollar, and a host of others peddle the prosperity gospel to enrich themselves from their followers’ gifts.

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3. The Prophet claims to be gifted by God to speak fresh revelation outside of Scripture

- These claim to have authoritative words of prediction, rebuke, or encouragement.
- He/she is commissioned and empowered by Satan for the purpose of misleading and disrupting Christ's church.
- John offered an urgent warning about him—I John 4:1 “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”
- Christians must “test the spirits” to determine if they originate with the Holy Spirit or with a demonic spirit.
- Later, John declared that God has spoken fully and finally in Scripture and offered the most solemn warning against anyone who claims to bring revelation equal or contrary to Scripture (Rev. 22:18-19)
- In the nineteenth century, Joseph Smith claimed to receive The Book of Mormon from the angel Moroni.
- Today the airwaves are chock-full of people claiming to speak in the name of God through the power of the Spirit.

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4. The Abuser uses his position of leadership to take advantage of other people.

- Usually, he takes advantage of them to feed his power quest of sexual lust
- Both Peter and Jude were aware of the Abuser's lechery: "And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed" (II Peter 2:2).
- Jude 4 'For certain people have crept in unnoticed perverting the grace of God'
- The Abuser works his way into women's lives, confidence, homes, and beds.
- When he is not pursuing illicit sexual pleasure, he may be domineering people to gain power, abusing them on his path to prominence.
- He does this in the name of ministry, with the claim of God's anointing.
- He unapologetically uses and abuses others to feed his lusts.
- Even in the church's earliest days, there were sex cults and other depraved perversions of the faith.
- For centuries, the papacy was little more than a corrupt power struggle.

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5. The Divider uses false doctrine to disrupt or destroy a church. He gleefully divides brother from brother and sister from sister.

- In Jude 18-21, he warned 'In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.' It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.
- The Divider is devoid of the Holy Spirit whose first fruit is love and whose special work is holding believers together in the bond of peace (Gal. 5:22, Eph. 4:3).
- This false teacher sometimes makes a minor doctrine into the mark of Christian maturity, causing factions to arise within the body.
- He may slyly introduce unbiblical doctrines, or he may undermine the ordained leadership

6. The Tickler is the false teacher who cares nothing for what God wants and everything for what men want.

- He is the man-pleaser rather than the God-pleaser and Paul in II Tim 4:3-4 thought of him as the ear-tickler.
- The Tickler craves popularity and praise from the world and to maintain his follower's respect, he preaches only the parts of the Bible they deem acceptable.

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- Therefore, he speaks much of happiness but little of sin, much of heaven but nothing of hell – presenting only what people want to hear, thus he preaches a partial gospel
- He preaches an empty gospel to a packed out church.
- In the nineteenth century he was Henry Ward Beecher, and in the twentieth he was Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller.
- Today he is Joel Osteen, pastor of the largest church in America, who is known equally for his toothy smile and his vacuous content.
- Like the false prophets of Jeremiah's day, he and the thousands like him say, "Peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14).

7. The Speculator is the one obsessed with novelty, originality, or speculation. The author of Hebrews warned his church of these "strange teachings," while Paul told Timothy to protect the church against any "different doctrine" (Heb.13:9, I Tim. 1:3).

- Teaching focused on speculation displaces the sure and steady doctrine of Scripture

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- The Speculator tosses aside the bulk of the Bible's content and the weight of the Bible's emphasis in order to obsess about matters that are trivial or novel.
- He grows weary of the old truths and pursues respectability through originality.
- Today, as in every age, the Speculator obsesses about the End Times, and somehow his failed predictions dissuade neither himself nor his followers.
- Recently we saw him obscuring the clear message of Scripture to search for hidden codes in Scripture.
- Sometimes he plants himself in academia, where one of his recent masterpieces is a re-imagined God who is unable to see and know the future.
- Paul labeled the Speculator a contradictory, irreverent babbler (1 Timothy 6:20-21).
[<https://www.challies.com/articles/7-false-teachers-in-the-church-today/> January 2017]

Of the false teachers John had in mind (1 John 2:19), he wrote, **They went out from us** – where the us is the apostolic first-person plural of this epistle (1:1–5; 4:6).

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Like the legalists of Acts 15, they had seceded from the apostolic churches of Jerusalem and Judea, then they were a particular threat to the readers because they came to them claiming roots in the soil out of which Christianity arose.

Thus John was eager to deny any connection with them -- **They did not really belong to us** paraphrases an expression more literally rendered, “they were not of us.”

The writer’s point was that these men did not really share the spirit and perspective of the apostolic circle, for if they had their secession would not have taken place.

Heresy, whether on the part of its saved members or unsaved people in it, always unmasks a **fundamental disharmony** with the spirit and doctrine of the apostles.

- A man in touch with God will submit to apostolic instruction (I John 4:6).

The readers were well fortified against the antichrists, however, since they had **an anointing from the Holy One** (i.e., from God; I John 2:20-21).

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