

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN

UPSIDE

A STUDY IN THE EPISTLE OF I JOHN

DOWN

WORLD

*Christ
Baptist
Church*

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Lesson 6
"Family
Resemblance"

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

I would like to start today's lesson reviewing where we have ventured so far in our quest to comprehend how to **'Live for God in an Upside-Down World.'**

I do this from the premise that we will not be able to fully live out the design of our **"Sonship"** (Ch. 3-5) until we have harnessed the meaning of **"Fellowship"** (Ch. 1-2)

And it is not to our ultimate advantage to be speaking of "fellowship" when we are actively quarantining and maintaining spatial distances from those outside our close inner circle.

Even with all of the technology and creative ways of maintaining connectivity, we will still have to await the results of diminished touch and face to face sharing.

In other words, "seeing church" is not necessarily "doing church" while we are "being church;" for weak ties will always manifest in the 'something that is missing.'

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Damon Centola's in his book, *How Behavior Spreads*, challenged one of the assumptions in the theory of the connectivity of social media.

- He contends that many behaviors do not spread like ideas and information.
- Damon contends that although a behavior may exist, but it cannot become viral through weak ties.
- So, in the book, he set out to prove that strong ties are actually necessary to spread behavioral change.

In light of what was going on when John wrote his letter of I John, the author was attempting to reignite the spark that he and the other disciples had with Jesus.

John was writing to encourage Christians expelled from the synagogues, from returning back to Judaism and denying Jesus' Messiahship.

Not only were Christians being expelled from synagogues and betrayed by the Jewish community in Smyrna (Rev. 2:9-10) and Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-9), they were tempted with the heresy of compromise and diminishing trust in Christ because of false prophets

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First John could be addressing a community like Ephesus, where the church had expelled the false teachers but neglected their love for one another (Rev. 2:2-4).

- Or it could be focusing on teachers advocating compromise to truth (I John 4:1-6)
- And the issue might be the heresies developing toward full-blown Gnosticism.
- **Gnostics** also tended to define sin in various ways; hence they believed their bodies could engage in behavior Christians considered sinful, but it was not sin to them
- **Docetists** believed Christ was divine but only seemed to become human (I John 4:2)
- **Cerinthians** believed the Christ-Spirit merely came on Jesus, but denied that he was actually the one and only Christ (I John 2:22).

All these thoughts from seemingly credible teachers, would no doubt cause some people to be “secessionist” from the faith in Christ.

John advocated for stronger ties to the words of Truth, that were taught by the Truth Himself. Therefore, everything had to pass two main tests: a **moral-ethical test** (keeping the commandments) and a **faith test** (the right view of Jesus).

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John was hoping for a spiritual pandemic like that which he was a part of over fifty years ago when this Christian thing first started.

Similarly, Malcolm Gladwell amplified this idea in his book, *The Tipping Point*. He said, “I’m convinced that ideas and behaviors and new products move through a population very much like a disease does.

What we have in Christ is not some metaphoric comparison. I’m talking about a literal analogy. The idea of the holy can be contagious in exactly the same way that a virus is.”

- But it requires **nearness – proximity – closeness** in fellowship

Many studies have highlighted the need for physical contact.

- This is especially important at birth when babies need to cry, suckle, and cling to their caregivers to help them survive and create bonding.
- Studies even prove that touch has been known to help with learning engagements
- Students are three times as likely to speak up in class after being patted in a friendly way

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Nearness, cuddling, and physical touching have been known to activate the hormone Oxytocin.

- Oxytocin helps humans connect to others and promotes feel-good sensations that foster a sense of well-being and happiness.
- Even if we aren't bonding with babies, adults can still benefit from the various rewards of an oxytocin release with friends, partners, or even animals.

PlushCare^R lists three Positive Health Manifestations from touch which go beyond social bonding and even promotes mental and physical health.

A. Inspire positive thinking and expand trust

- Known as the “feel good” hormone, oxytocin helps inspire positive thinking and maintaining an optimistic outlook on the world.
- The role of oxytocin for bonding also extends to helping generate feelings of compassion during interactions.
- This contributes to an expansion of trust among individuals during social situations.

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B. Reduce social anxiety and stress

- Physical touch increases levels of dopamine and serotonin, two neurotransmitters that help regulate your mood as well as help your body relieve stress and anxiety.
- Dopamine is also known to regulate the pleasure center in your brain that is a good counter to feelings of anxiety.
- One study on breast cancer patients found that massage therapy helped relax participants and increase dopamine and serotonin levels.

C. Boost immune system and lower blood pressure

- Physical touch is known to improve the function of your immune system as well as reduce diseases such as those associated with the heart and blood.
- One study on women found that receiving more hugs from their partners led to lower heart rates and blood pressure.

[<https://plushcare.com/blog/advantages-of-human-touch-hugs/>]

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By now, some may be wondering what does have to do with bible study. Listen how John opened this letter:

- **I John 1:1-4** We saw him with our very own eyes. We gazed upon him and heard him speak. Our hands actually touched him, the one who was from the beginning, the Living Expression of God.²This Life-Giver was made visible and we have seen him. We testify to this truth: the eternal Life-Giver lived face-to-face with the Father and has now dawned upon us.³So we proclaim to you what we have seen and heard *about this Life-Giver* so that we may share and enjoy this life together. For truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus, the Anointed One.⁴We are writing these things to you because we want to release to you our fullness of joy.

[Oxytocin, dopamine and serotonin levels are flowing and desire to be shared]

John was attempting to explain why it is imperative that Christians raise the priority of investing in relationships with each other.

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- You may know of churchgoers who believe they can walk with God without other believers.
- Perhaps they have not been taught the benefits of knowing God together with others
- Because of the gospel, we can be honest with one another and engage one another in healthy conflict.
- Because of the gospel, we have nothing to fear, because perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).
 - **Hebrews 10:24-25** says, “And let us watch out for one another to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.”

So far we have looked at the world through the lens of **Acts 17:6** “.....*these who have turned the world upside down have come here too.*”

- What a testimony to the success of the Gospel, even from its enemies!

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Because of the Christ in us, it is intended that we excite commotion and disturbance in places where the holy nature of God is impugned.

- Anyone proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ will cause confusion and disorder in a system that is operating in inverted righteousness.
- Our models toward this end have been:



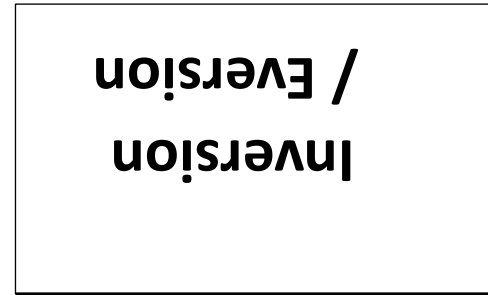
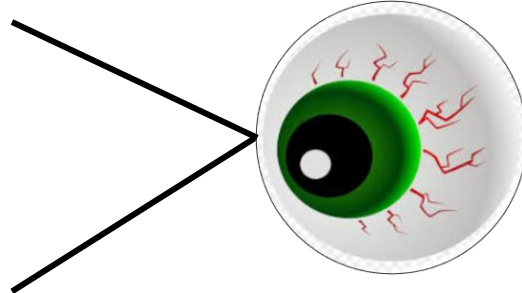
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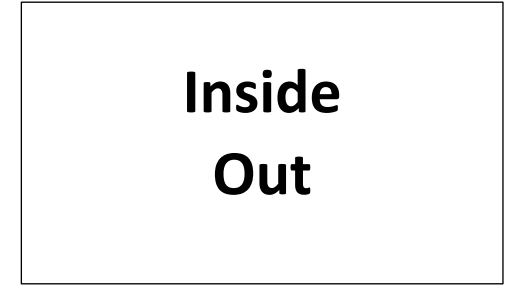
Reversed Polarity



Visual Acuity



Philosophical Viewpoints



Psychological Correction



The Backwards Guy

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When we say there is a resemblance of someone or something, we are referring to an obvious similarity in nature or appearance.

I am sure you may be familiar with the old saying, “opposites attract,” yet in reality, what the heart wants is someone who resembles its owner – and that resemblance increases the longer parties are connected (e.g., *fellowship*).

A study conducted at the University of Michigan tested the hypothesis of time and resemblance by analyzing the photos of couples taken when they were newlyweds and photographs of the same couples taken 25 years later.

- The results showed that the couples had grown to look more like each other over time.
- And, the happier that the couple said they were, the more likely they were to have increased in their physical similarity.

The lead researcher suggested that older couples looked more alike because people in close contact mimic each other’s facial expressions.

[<https://www.livescience.com/8384-couples-start.html#>]

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We can understand God's forbiddance of images because it is impossible to make an image of something or someone from a distance.

- To remedy the problem, God sent His Son who is the express image of the Father (Col. 1:15)
- Thus, man's resemblance is restored (Imago Dei -- Gen. 1:26) by our union with Christ

This is better understood in light of **Romans 8:28-29a** *“So we are convinced that every detail of our lives is continually woven together to fit into God's perfect plan of bringing good into our lives, for we are his lovers who have been called to fulfill his designed purpose. ²⁹For he knew all about us before we were born and he destined us from the beginning to share the likeness of his Son...”* (TPT)

- **Likeness** (image-KJV) – **eikon = profile; representation; resemblance**

So we advancing from fellowship” which leads us to “sonship,” lets read **John 3:1-3**: ¹ Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

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² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

In this second half of I John, comprised of Ch. 3-5, the word fellowship is not found, but all of the relational emphasis speaks to those who are “born of God.” (3:9;4:7;5:4)

- This passage ties in with John 3 and emphasizes the theme “God is love” (4:8, 16).

In I John 3, the writer states that a true child of God will prove his spiritual birth by being obedient to God’s Word.

- In the first 2 verses, John gives two motives for obedience:

I. God’s Awesome (‘ādar-- glorious) Love (3:1) -- Behold what manner of love is literally “Behold, what foreign-kind of love” (potapos – what country, race or tribe; interrogative).

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- This is what Paul is in mind when he wrote **Rom. 5:6–10** “For when we were still **without strength**, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸ But **God demonstrates His own love** toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, **we shall be saved by His life**.
 - Paul had already established that God’s love is evidenced by the Spirit’s presence
 - Without strength refers to the ungodly (sinners) – powerless to deliver themselves
 - There are three dominant motivations to obedience **(a) Fear (b) Duty (c) Love**
 - Love is the greatest motive in the world, and if we understand God’s love, we will obey His Word.
- ☐ **John 14:15** “If you love me, keep My commandments.”

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- The unsaved world has no understanding of this love, and it hates us.
- Since the world does not know Christ, so it cannot know Christ's own.
- The Bible is replete with encouragement to reproduce God's love
- Willing and cheerful obedience is the only obedience which is acceptable to our Lord
- To profess love to Christ, while disregarding His will is defiance of His authority
- Often in the NT we are reminded how our love for God is cemented to obedience

☐ **John 14:21** He that **hath my commandments**, and **keepeth them**, he it is that **loveth me**: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

☐ **John 15:10-14** "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. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that your joy may be full*. ¹²This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you

¹³Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends

¹⁴ You are My friends if you do whatever I command you

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- ☐ **John 21:15** “So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, **lovest thou me more than these?** He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed my lambs.**
- ☐ **II Cor 5:14** For the love of Christ constraineth (**synechē to compel; be preoccupied by**)-- us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:
- ☐ **II Cor 8:8** I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to **prove the sincerity (gnēsios-- legitimacy; genuine) of your love.**
- ☐ **Eph 3:16-17** That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being **rooted and grounded in love**
- ☐ **I Peter 1:8** Whom **having not seen, ye love;** in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:
- ☐ **I John 2:3-5** And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the **love of God perfected:** hereby know we that we are in him.
 - **Perfectured (teleioō= accomplished; completed; finish-- so in 4:13 & 5:3)**

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☐ **I John 4:19-21** We love him, because **he first loved us.** ²⁰If a man say, I love God, and **hateth his brother**, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? ²¹And this commandment have we from him, That **he who loveth God love his brother also.**

☐ **I John 5:2-3** **By this we know that we love the children of God**, when we love God, and keep his commandments.³For **this is the love of God**, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

II. Christ's Promised Return (3:2–3) “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And **everyone who has this hope** in Him **purifies himself**, just as He is pure.

- What we are now because of the grace of God is wonderful; but what we are going to be is even more wonderful! “**We shall be like Him.**” The incentive here is for the saint who really expects Christ to return, will actively obey His Word and keep his life clean.

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- The incentive here is for the saint who really expects Christ to return, will actively obey His Word and keep his life clean.
- We shall see Him **“as He is,”** but we must also **“walk as He walked”** (see 2:6) and **“be righteous even as He is”** (3:7).
- We are expected to purify ourselves and keep our hearts clean (II Cor. 7:1).
- Despite all of the world events that seem to mirror Biblical prophecy on signs of the return of Christ, no one knows when Jesus will return (Matt. 24:36)
- Nevertheless, there is agreement with Paul that we look for **“the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”** (Titus 2:13).
- Knowing that the Lord could come back today, some are tempted to stop what they are doing and just **“wait”** for Him.
- However, there is a big difference between knowing that Jesus **could return** today and knowing that He **will return** today.
- The time of His coming is something God has not revealed to anyone, and so, until He calls us to Himself, we should continue serving Him.

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- In Jesus' parable of the ten talents, the departing king instructs his servants to **“occupy till I come”** (Luke 19:13 KJV)

The return of Christ is always presented in Scripture as a **great motivation to action**, not as a reason to cease from action.

- In I Corinthians 15:58, Paul wraps up his teaching on the rapture by saying, **“Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.”**
- In I Thessalonians 5:6, Paul concludes a lesson on Christ's coming with these words: **“So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.”**
- To retreat and **“hold the fort”** was never Jesus' intention for us.
- Instead, we work while we can. **“Night is coming, when no one can work”** (John 9:4).

We are all called to eagerly anticipate Jesus' imminent return, and we must stay busy in Kingdom work until He returns

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