

“Growing Together in the Gospel”

1 John 1:5-10

The doctrine of grace creates a culture of grace where good things happen to bad people. A gracious church culture proves that Jesus is the Holy One who forgives sinners, the King who befriends his enemies, the Genius who counsels failures.

Gospel doctrine and gospel culture do not coexist by lucky chance. The doctrine creates and sustains the culture. The way we live together in our churches grows out of what we believe together. So the gospel must land on each of us personally. You and I must believe the gospel for ourselves, first and foremost. But the gospel also creates a new kind of community—a gospel culture called a church. (Ray Ortlund Jr.)

The God of Light and Life (v. 5)

- God is light in the sense of sinless perfection.

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. (John 3:19)

- God is light in the sense of life, peace, and wholeness—life as it’s meant to be.
 - John is taking us back to creation (first creation and new creation).

That which was from the beginning... (1 John 1:1)

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:1-3)

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. (Revelation 22:1-5)

- John is taking us forward to the church.

The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. ⁹ Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.

¹⁰ Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. (1 John 2:8-10)

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. (Matthew 5:14)

*To all who are weary and need rest;
To all who mourn and long for comfort;
To all who feel worthless and wonder if God even cares;
To all who are weak and fail and desire strength;
To all who sin and need a Savior;
This church opens wide her doors with a welcome from Jesus Christ, the Ally of his enemies, the Defender of the guilty, the Justifier of those who have no excuses left, the Friend of sinners. Welcome!*

The Practice of Light and Life (vv. 6-10)

- We must have honesty about our sin.
- We must have hope in our Savior.

The Invitation to Light and Life

- Would you come and walk in the light with us?
- Would you confess your sins and struggles to one another?

In confession the breakthrough to community takes place. Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes in it, the more disastrous is his isolation.... This can happen even in the midst of a pious community.

The cross of Jesus Christ destroys all pride. We cannot find the cross of Jesus if we shrink from going to the place where it is to be found, namely, the public death of the sinner. And we refuse to bear the cross when we are ashamed to take upon ourselves the shameful death of the sinner in confession. In confession we break through to the true fellowship of the cross of Jesus Christ; in confession we affirm and accept our cross. (Bonhoeffer)

- Would you consider how deeply the gospel affects your life and relationships?

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you. (1 Corinthians 15:1-2)