

**Conformed to the Image of God's Son, Jesus**  
**The Importance of Routine**  
**1 John 1:1-10**

**Pray for Ted and Gail McKinney**

**The world is divided into two groups of people. You may assume my next words will be, "Saved and unsaved," or, "Those who know Jesus and those who do not." This is true, but today I am thinking about those whose lives are characterized by routine and those who feel restricted by routine.**

**We are in a summer-long series here at Grace titled "Conformed to the Image of God's Son, Jesus." If you pay attention to the grammar of the title you may get the sense that the work of conforming comes from outside us, and you would be right to understand that God is working to make us like Jesus. It is also true, as Pastor David said last week in his excellent message from Romans 12:1-2, that we should put ourselves in position to be conformed to the image of Christ. That is where routine comes in.**

**King David claimed in Psalm 55:17 that he prayed morning, noon, and night, and, interestingly, his prayers in this case were laments. Daniel prayed three times a day. Jesus often got up before dawn to pray. In 1 Timothy 4:7, the Apostle Paul urged Timothy to train himself for godliness, or, as it says in the NASB, "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." If there is one essential for walking with Christ, it is routine. If there is one pursuit that alludes me, and, alludes some of you as well, it is routine.**

**Our text today is the ten verses of 1 John 1. If I were preaching through the book of 1 John, I would approach this text differently than I will today. I promise not to take liberties with Scripture, but since this is a topical series, we are able to look at the text from a**

**different angle. I will begin with a brief explanation of the text to keep us from getting off track, then I will talk about the routine of our relationship with Jesus, the routine of our relationship with other believers, and the routine of repentance, which ties back to Psalm 51 a few weeks ago. Before we begin, let's pray.**

**As I read the first two verses, try to determine if John is making a theological point or if his heart is overflowing with love for Jesus:**

**1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—**

**Theological language or heart language? Both, I think. There is no question that John was making the point that Jesus came in the flesh and that he had both seen and touched Jesus. There are several similarities between the first four verses in 1 John and the first 18 verses of John's Gospel. Jesus, who has existed eternally with the Father and the Spirit, came to earth in the flesh – and, that is deep theology. Even so, by the time you finish verse 4, you can almost hear John say, "Let me tell you about my Jesus!" Verses 3-4:**

**3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.**

**"Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." But our fellowship is also with other believers who follow Jesus. There is much joy in this fellowship – even greater joy than social media can bring in 2020! If watching the news or keeping up with**

**social media is more your routine than fellowshiping with the Lord or with his children, then I doubt there is much joy in your life.**

**Verses 5-10 describe the benefits of following Jesus and practicing repentance, but also the danger of hiding our sins and refusing to acknowledge our wrongdoing. In verses 5-6, John says:**

**5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.**

**God is light and if we are to walk with him, we must be honest with ourselves and with others about what God expects of his children. In verse 6, John says that when we claim to be walking in the light, but we are secretly sinning, we are hypocrites, deceiving others about who we are. A remedy is given in verse 7, then a warning in verse 8:**

**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 his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**

**Most of the Greek verbs in 1 John 1 are written in the present tense, which indicates a continual action. If we are walking in the light, we are continually fellowshiping with other believers and the blood of Jesus is continually cleansing us from our sins. Does that mean we are getting saved over and over? No, but it does mean that we must confess our sins, frequently, as verse 9 will imply. Walking in the light does not mean we are free from sinful thoughts, words, and deeds, but it does mean that we will be honest about our sin and recognize our need for forgiveness, which Jesus' blood accomplishes. If we refuse to be honest about our sins, we go from deceiving others in verse 6 to deceiving ourselves in verse 8. You**

**know the type, right? You tell a lie long enough you will begin to believe it yourself. There is a remedy in verse 9 and a grave warning in verse 10:**

**9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.**

**Since we are told in 1 John 5:13 that this letter is written for believers, we know that verse 9 is written for us, and what a beautiful promise of forgiveness it is! When we are cleansed from all unrighteousness, we will look – like Jesus. Confession of sins is an important component in the process of being conformed to the image of Jesus. If we refuse to be honest about our sins, we go from deceiving others in verse 6 to deceiving ourselves in verse 8 to calling God a liar in verse 10, with his Word having no impact on us. It is not that a believer will say, “God is a liar,” but it may sound like, “That is not what that verse means,” and by taking Scripture out of context to make it say what we want it to say.**

**I John is a short book and the temptation is to read it quickly and casually. It is difficult to identify structure in John’s letter, although themes are easy to spot. If you read slowly and seriously, you will realize that this life to which we are called is no joke. John’s letter was written near the end of his life, late in the first century when the church was suffering persecution. The elders of GCC have decided to preach a series of sermons, soon, that will help prepare the church for persecution. We recognize that the Christian life in our current cultural environment is no joke. We need to prepare ourselves and our families to suffer for the faith, if so called.**

**It is interesting that John does not write much about suffering. He does imply, though, the importance of routine for those who have eternal life in Jesus, and routine prepares us for “come what may.” I**

**mentioned three important routines at the beginning, this morning, and I will address each one briefly, beginning with:**

### **1. Routine in our relationship with Jesus**

**I have long loved the first four verses of 1 John 1. Even though John was making a theological point, the intensity of his love for Jesus leaps off the page into my heart every time I read these verses.**

**The Apostle John identified Jesus as *logos*, or, the Word – the Word of life, here in 1 John. We have already seen in John’s Gospel – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelled among us.” Then, after calling himself “the truth” in John 14:6, Jesus prayed for us in John 17:17, “Sanctify them in the truth; your Word is truth.”**

**I may, yet, in this series, preach from 2 Corinthians 3, especially verse 18. The truth expounded there is that when we spend time in God’s Word, or, the Bible, gazing at Jesus, we will be transformed into the same image that we see – we will begin to look like Jesus. The Bible is, as James 1 calls it, the perfect law of liberty.**

**Do you notice a difference when you begin your day in the Word? When I ask the question I am about to ask, you can be assured that I struggle with the same thing – and, this is a question I asked not long ago: What is the first thing you reach for in the morning – the Bible or your phone? This world is passing away; God’s Word is eternal. If you are a believer and you have not already done so, establish a routine of time with Jesus in the Word. Do not try to live this life on your own, though. We must also pursue:**

### **2. Routine in our relationship with others who walk in the light**

**“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”** Is there anyone happy that we are meeting outside with about one third of the numbers that usually attend? Please know, the elders and staff are aware of the sacrifices we are all making, and I know that some of you have questions about the science and the government orders and the decision to continue our services this way. The church is designed to function as the body of Christ, and if the arms and the toes are unable to get together, it feels unnatural. The elders frequently discuss when we might get back inside, and then we learn about those who have become infected in churches that are meeting indoors. One church in Angier had several to be infected, and the church in Banner Elk where my son-in-law serves on staff had to go back to online services only because of Coronavirus. Please know, we would love to be inside, but please, brothers and sisters, do not let this be the issue that separates us. Believers are headed for increasingly troubled waters that have nothing to do with masks and meetings. We need each other.

Here is my challenge to you: find a way to connect with other believers. Of course, I would encourage you to be safe, but connect with those in the body of Christ here at Grace. I would offer suggestions, but you are more than capable of connecting in such times and, furthermore, I do not want to upset anyone with any suggestions I might make or not make. Instead, I will offer this quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, found in his excellent little book, *Life Together*, that addresses both of our first two points. Quote:

**“A Christian needs another Christian who speaks God’s Word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged, for by himself he cannot help himself without belying the truth. He needs his brother man as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation. He needs his brother solely because of Jesus Christ. The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ**

**in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother's is sure." Close quote.**

**I need you because the word of Christ that you share with me is stronger than the Christ in my heart. I need you! You may especially be able to help me with this last point:**

### **3. Routine of repentance**

**What does it mean to repent? 1 John 1:9, written in the present tense, indicates that repentance, or, confession of sin, must be an ongoing practice for the Christian. The Greek word is *homologeō*, which means "to agree with." If you agree with God about your sin, then you can be certain that he is faithful and just to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.**

**What does repentance look like? Sometimes it looks like King David agonizing over his sin as we saw him do in Psalm 51 two weeks ago on Sunday morning. When we compare ourselves with David, though, we may be discouraged and worried about our failure to properly grieve over our sin. It could be that when we seek to define our relationship with God, we look inside to see how sincere we are. But when you look inside yourself, what will you find? Darkness and deceit. To repent, do you need to "mean it" when you come to God, or do you have "to really mean it?" Or "really, really, really mean it?" What you must do is to believe God's Word. That never means you are casual about your sins, but you must believe that God promises to forgive you when you agree with him about your sins. Your sister or brother can help you believe.**

**How can we find this place that is blessed with God's forgiveness and favor and peace? The routine of communion with Jesus, in God's Word, and the routine of communion with brothers and sisters who will remind us of God's promises and keep us from both**

**stubborn resistance and self-defeating introspection that destroys faith, which, in turn, will lead us to the routine of repentance.**

**I told you at the beginning, that I am not the best with routine. Even so, one of the resources that has helped me greatly, and one that I have routinely recommended to you is, *Every Moment Holy*, a book of liturgies written by Douglas McKelvey. The liturgies of the hours – Daybreak, Midday, and Nightfall – have helped me establish more routine in my life than I have enjoyed in decades, and that has strengthened my relationship with the Lord. May I yet again commend this resource to you? Whether you have *Every Moment Holy* or not, may I challenge all of us to spend time every day this week with Jesus, in God’s Word. Why? Because we are being conformed into the image of Jesus.` Let’s pray.**