



PROMISE KEEPER

LIVING WITH CONFIDENCE IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

Small Group Discussion Guide



PREPARATION

STUDY

Spend the week studying 1 John 1:5–10. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

DETERMINE

Determine which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group.

PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT

When I confess my sin, God promises to forgive and cleanse me.



GROUP DISCUSSION

■ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

■ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

■ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

■ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

NO FAILURE IS FINAL

Last week your group looked at God's promise to give you a way out when you're tempted. This week you will discuss those times when you *do* give in to temptation and how to deal with failure.

There are plenty of times when we fall flat on our face, right? Maybe it's been a long day, you're tired, hurt, angry or lonely. Those are the times when temptation often comes our way. Sometimes we choose sin over God. We explode in anger and frustration instead of being patient. We're resentful toward someone we're called to love. We fear the future and choose worry or anxiety over peace.

When we fall, we need a promise to pick us back up. God promises to forgive sin when we confess it, and He is always faithful to His promises. This gives us hope that no failure is final in God's eyes. We have hope in Jesus, who succeeded where we so often fail.

Q: *What does the phrase "no failure is final" mean, in your own words?*

Q: *Recall a time when you had to ask for forgiveness from someone.*



LEARN

Select 2–3 questions to discuss as a group.

THE MESSAGE: GOD IS LIGHT

Central to John’s message about forgiveness is the character of God. He tells believers, “We are teaching you the same message Jesus taught us. God is light, and there is no darkness in Him.” For John, to walk with Jesus is to walk in the light. He illuminates our lives with His truth. Through Him, we see the path before us with more clarity and understanding. On the other hand, to walk in sin is to walk in darkness. Sin clouds and distorts our thinking. It deceives us by making us think we’re on the path to life when we’re really on the path to death.

Walking in the light unites believers. Walking in sin divides them. Walking in light brings us closer to God’s truth. Walking in darkness brings us further from it.

READ: *1 John 1:5–10. Which words would you use to describe God’s character other than “light”?*

Q: *Why is it impossible to have fellowship with God and walk in darkness?*

THE PROMISE: FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING

On the heels of this warning, Paul gives a promise. He wants these believers to remember who God is. He is faithful. Therefore Paul tells them, “God will never put you in a situation where your only option is to give into temptation and sin. He promises to always provide you a way out of the temptation.”

For the Corinthians, turning from idolatry carries with consequences. They will likely suffer and be persecuted for that choice. That’s why Paul reassures them that God will give them strength to endure whenever they do the right thing and obey Him. Other believers in times past had resisted temptation, and so could the Corinthians. What matters is whether they will turn to God and rely on Him in times of temptation.

Q: What are the dangers of not confessing sin? What are the benefits?

Q: Why is it important to remember that you're a work in progress? How does that help you in the fight against temptation and sin?



LIVE

Select 2–3 questions from this section to answer.

[NOT] REFLECTING HIS CHARACTER

We are made in God's image but sin distorts and perverts who we are. When we sin, we don't reflect God's character, which is holy, righteous and good. When we choose sin over Him, we choose to live in darkness rather than in His light.

John's message for us is that God's children don't walk in darkness. They move toward His light. Their lives are marked by a desire and effort to kill sin and grow closer to Jesus, the Light of the World. If you are a child of God, you choose to live by Jesus' teaching and example. You allow Jesus to define what's right and wrong for you. You live under His authority and obey Him, regardless of the situation. Jesus never gives you an excuse to sin. There is always an opportunity to be faithful to God—even when you're tempted to sin.

Q: To live in the light is to have integrity. Why is integrity important for a Christian?

Q: What's one practical thing you can do this week to grow closer to Jesus?

YOUR PART, GOD'S PART

God's promise of forgiveness and cleansing protects you from those condemning, shameful and accusatory voices

that always seem to creep into your mind when you give in to temptation. His promise also reminds you of God's ultimate desire: cleansing from sin and its enslaving power.

John tells you exactly what you need to do when you blow it. You need to confess your sin. To confess means to acknowledge your sin. Name your sin as something that goes against God and His will for your life. You can say something like, "Lord, you know what's best for me, and all you ask me to do is trust you and walk in your ways. But I haven't. I have sinned. I'm sorry. Forgive me. Spirit, change me."

When you do this, God promises to do His part—He will forgive your sin. He doesn't count it against you. He removes it from your record. God also promises to cleanse you. He washes away the guilt, shame and condemnation.

Q: *What are some of the voices you hear after you've failed?*

Q: *Why is it necessary to confess **before** you're forgiven and cleansed?*



LEAD

Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.

HOPE IN THE GOSPEL

God doesn't forgive because of who we are or anything we do. His forgiveness flows out of His character, which is loving and gracious. God is faithful, righteous and good. Ultimately, He forgives because of who Jesus is and what He did.

God made a way for sinful people to have a relationship with a holy God. Long ago in the Bible's story, God promised to send a hero to deal with the problem of sin for us. We're told that in the fullness of time, God the Father sent Jesus the Son into this world on a mission to do what we couldn't do—confront evil and sin and overcome it. His death and resurrection proved that He won the victory over sin and that forgiveness is possible. Our hero made a way for us to return to God and have a relationship with Him.

Because Jesus died and rose again, God doesn't require you to pay for your sin. Jesus has already paid the price for

you. He declared, “It is finished,” on the cross. He did this so that you might be forgiven and cleansed of your sin. The cross gives you hope for forgiveness and cleansing today.

Q: *How does Jesus’ victory give you hope that victory over sin is possible in your life?*

Q: *What are some ways you can encourage one another in the hope of the gospel in your community?*



PRAY

Spend time praising God for who He is. He is holy, righteous and good. He is pure, and there is no flaw or defilement in Him. He always does the right thing in a just way. His is good, which means He never acts with evil intentions. Ask the Spirit to reveal sin in your life. Confess it and ask God to forgive and cleanse you.



FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read John 20:23 and reflect on what Jesus says about forgiving others.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their lives.



ALL SIN “All people—the world, the Jews, and believers—are guilty of sin. Christians are different from the rest in that they acknowledge this fact and receive forgiveness, but those who deny their guilt only deceive themselves.”¹ Christians sin. Their sinfulness makes them no different than the rest of humanity. However, what distinguishes Christians from others is that they admit their sins and their need for God, whereas others rely on their good works or other beliefs.

JOHN’S COMFORT “John also makes it clear (1 John 3:6, 9) that persistent unrepented sin is not the mark of a Christian—God ‘will by no means clear the guilty’ (Num. 14:18).”² It’s one thing to struggle with sin. It’s quite another to give yourself over to sin. How we respond to sin in our lives matters. Are we fighting against it or willfully giving ourselves over to it?

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS “The free gift of forgiveness carries with it purification from unrighteousness. God accepts us as righteous because He imputes to us the righteousness of Christ. That is, the very righteousness of Christ—His perfect fulfillment of all of the Lord’s requirements—is reckoned to our account when we rest in Jesus alone for salvation.”³ If you are a child of God, then God looks at you and sees the perfect obedience and righteousness of Christ—not your disobedience and sinfulness.

ENDNOTES:

1. Tom Thatcher, “1 John,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews–Revelation (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 432.
2. Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2430–2431.
3. R. C. Sproul, ed., *The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version (2015 Edition)* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2015), 2268.