

JANUARY 2, 2022 • STUDY GUIDE •

Life in the Spirit

TRANSFORMED
BY GOD

PART 2





LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Transformed by God : Honest Fellowship in a Culture of Grace

Life in the Spirit: Transformed by God Honest Fellowship in a Culture of Grace

By Colton Conrad

1 John 1:5-2:11; 3:23-24

How we enter into the church, sets the tone for how we live in the church: We enter by God's grace through the blood of Jesus.

God's grace creates a culture of grace

Luke 7:36-50

"Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?... 'I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.'"

"Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

His grace pulls us up and he calls us to allow that grace to produce in us a culture of grace. So what does that culture of grace look like?

Honest Fellowship

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, purifies us from all sin."

"Walking in the light isn't so much referring to *sinlessness*, but to *honesty*."

Confession

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." - 1 John 1:9

"To whom will we make confession? According to Jesus' promise, every Christian brother [or sister] can hear the confession of another. But will he understand?"



May he not be so far above us in his Christian life that they would only turn away from us with no understanding of our personal sins?

Anybody who lives beneath the cross and who has discerned in the cross of Jesus the utter wickedness of all mankind and of his own heart will find there is no sin that can ever be alien to him. Anybody who has once been horrified by the dreadfulness of his own sin that nailed Jesus to the cross will no longer be horrified by even the rankest sins of a brother or sister. Looking at the cross of Jesus, he knows the human heart...Only the brother [or sister] under the cross can hear a confession.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Are you a brother or sister “under the cross”?

“Sin demands to have a person by themselves, it withdraws [them] from community.”

- Bonhoeffer

Walking in the light takes *honesty*. And that honesty, even with just one brother or sister - brings you into fellowship.

“If a Christian is in the fellowship of confession with a brother or sister, they will never be alone again, anywhere.” - Bonhoeffer

So, while I ask you the question - do you have a brother or sister in this church who you could genuinely confess to and be ministered to by, I also want to ask each of you: are you the kind of follower of Jesus who someone could safely confess sin to? You can be when you behold the grace of God and look at your brother out of love!

Humility triumphs over Pride at the Cross

Bonhoeffer says that the root of all sin is pride - and really I find this one of the main things that keeps us from coming to God, because we want to be our own Saviour. Confession in the presence of a brother or sister “is the profoundest kind of humiliation. It hurts, it cuts a man down, it is a dreadful blow to pride...Because this humiliation is so hard we continually scheme to evade confessing to a brother or sister.”



"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5)

"Gospel + Safety + Time = A Church Where Anybody Can Grow"

- Ray Ortland, Jr.

Keeping His Commands

"If you love me, keep my commands"

- John 14:15

"My command is this: *Love each other as I have loved you.* Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command."

- John 15:12-14

"This is my command: that you love each other."

- John 15:17

"A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so must love one another."

- John 13:34

John will go on to say, in the text we read earlier, that whoever does not love their brother or sister, is in darkness.

And how does God love us?

He forgives us. He bears our burdens. He encourages us and comforts us by His Spirit, he draws near to us. He is patient with us. He is kind to us, He is not standing off in his pride, but he is gentle and lowly in heart and saying come to me.

He does not delight in evil, but he rejoices in the truth. Jesus' grace reaches out to us in a way that does not dishonor us, he is not easily angered (the Bible says God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love!), he keeps no record of wrongs - and he calls us to love one another like that!

What a community this would be if we reached out to one another, out of the grace we received? We can do that, by the power of the Holy Spirit alive in us. We can love one another!

Love One Another

1. *We love one another by confessing our sins to one another (Proverbs 28:13, James 5:16)*
2. *We love one another when we bear each other's burdens and forgive each other (Gal. 6:2, Eph. 4:32)*
3. *We love one another by encouraging one another (1 Thess. 5:11)*
4. *We love one another by bringing one another to the Advocate (James 5:12, Eph. 6:18)*



"When you pray, four persons are involved. The Father listens, the Spirit helps, and the Son intercedes. A Christian never prays alone."

- Colin Smith

The Advocate

In our text, John wrote: "I write these things so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sin, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

- 1 John 2:1-2

"In Jesus Christ, we are given a friend who will always enjoy rather than refuse our presence. This is a companion whose embrace of us does not strengthen or weaken depending on how clean or unclean, how attractive or revolting, how faithful or fickle, we presently are. The friendliness of his heart for us subjectively is as fixed and stable as is the declaration of his justification of us objectively."

- Dane Ortlund

SMALL GROUPS & PERSONAL STUDY

1. **Confession:** Do you have a few people, or a person, in your group, who you know loves you and will remind you of the gospel if you confess your sin to them?

Have you considered taking the time to really "love one another" in that kind of deep way each week?

Do you think confession is really as valuable to our life together as Bonhoeffer says it is?

Pray that God would fill your heart with His grace as you seek to grow into deep relationships and make room for honest fellowship and confession.

2. Very often, when we think of keeping God's commands, we think first of inner morality. Quite often, we don't think of our love for one another as fulfilling God's commands, even though Jesus consistently says so. Consider the four ways of loving one another that Pastor Colton highlighted in his message. How could you obey God in those ways this week?

i. *We love one another by confessing our sins to one another (Proverbs 28:13, James 5:16)*

ii. *We love one another when we bear each other's burdens and forgive each other (Gal. 6:2, Eph. 4:32)*

iii. *We love one another by encouraging one another (1 Thess. 5:11)*

iv. *We love one another by bringing one another to the Advocate (James 5:12, Eph. 6:18)*

3. One of the things that Pastor Colton appealed to was our Advocate, Jesus Christ, and the way He loves us - as fueling and helping us understand the way we ought to love one another and build a culture of grace.

Write down some of the ways you know Jesus loves you, and then pray about how you can love those in your church community like that.

