

# Southwest Life Groups

A Place to Belong...A Place to Transform

March 16, 2008

*Focus:* To explore John's teaching on sin and holiness as we struggle with our rationalization of our own sin.

## I John - Lesson #3 A View of Sin and Holiness

**Introduction:** Intellectually we agree that all sin is equal, but isn't it fair to say that we believe some sin to be worse than other sin. Begin the evening with a conversation about our views of sin.

- What sins have we decided are the worst and most heinous?
- What sins do we look past as if they don't really matter? ( Ref. 2 Cor. 12:20-21)
- Assess the consequences of our views?
- Describe what happens as we begin to learn to justify our sin.

**Text:** 1 John 1:8- 2:2

- Revisit Gnosticism and their view of sin.
- Read the text...you may even want to read from the beginning of the letter.
- Why would these people claim to be without sin? (Gnostic thought)
- Some believers are self loathing and hate their sin but won't accept grace. Others think they can do whatever they want and be covered by grace. Describe John's view of sin and holiness.

**Application:**

- Is sin a big deal to us?
- What sin in your life have you rationalized?
- What are the possible consequences for you and your family of that rationalization?
- How does that rationalization affect our interactions with non-believers?
- What do we need to hold you accountable to this week?



# Background on 1 John

- This was a church of second and third generation Christians (around 100AD). The wonder and amazement had been lost and Christianity had become more of a habit.
- The standards of being a Christian had been found to be too difficult. They had been called to be different and it was hard and they were struggling with that!
- There was no persecution of this church that we know of but it was more about a seduction from the world. People were trying to make Christianity more intellectually respectable. They did not want to stand out but wanted to blend into the culture. Christ was being lost and culture was being found.
- The book was written to fight off these false teachers...the problem was what was known as Gnosticism.

Gnosticism...General belief that all matter is evil and that only Spirit is good. So of course the body is hated but the spirit within us is good. So the purpose of life is to liberate the spirit from the vile prison it is in. This could only be done through an elaborate ritual which only true Gnostics could supply.

1. These false teachers had once been part of the church...2:19
2. They denied Christ's messiahship...2:22
3. The incarnation was impossible according to them because they thought all matter was evil.

## Practical Consequences of Gnosticism

1. **It destroyed Christian fellowship**...ordinary people didn't have the "right" knowledge. It divided people into two classes...the haves and the have nots. Gnostics believed "ordinary" people were worthless and had no value or hope. The Gnostics however saw themselves as akin to God. This created a spiritual aristocracy. The mark of true religion for a Gnostic was contempt for ordinary man while the Christ followers mark of true religion was love for everyone.
2. **It Created a false view of sin and self**...Since Gnostics believed that the body was evil... 1. some believed that they could do whatever they wanted with this body. 2. Some treated the body harshly and inappropriately. 3. Some believed they had already reached perfection so sin was not even possible for them.