

Created for Fellowship

By Linda Rex

April 7, 2024, 2nd Sunday in Easter—Have you ever wished that you could move away to a remote island away from all the people in the world, and be by yourself? The thought of not having to cope with and sort through the tangled web of relational issues is an attractive one, though in reality, running away in this manner will not guarantee freedom from stress and difficulty.

The reason is that we cannot escape from ourselves. Often our issues with coping and sorting through our difficult circumstances and relationships are grounded in our own faulty and flawed ways of relating, thinking, responding, and acting. We often do not realize the impact we have on those around us, and don't see how we are influencing or affecting the people closest to us.

In our New Testament reading for this Sunday, 1 John 1:1–2:2, the apostle John explains that there are two ways in which we walk as human beings—in the light or in the darkness, in the truth or in a lie, in life or in death. The reality is that everyone of us is fully capable of both at any moment in our lives, even after we have come to faith in Jesus Christ. Coming to faith in Christ enables us to begin to live into the truth of who we are in him, in his resurrected glory in face-to-face fellowship with his Father in the Spirit. But it does not guarantee that in this life we will never sin, or miss the mark of our true humanity or design.

John is clear about who the Source of our life, our truth, our fellowship with God and one another is—Jesus Christ. This is because we find in Jesus what it means to be truly human. We find that this is the One who eternally existed in the Godhead, and yet, took on our human flesh with all of its inherent weaknesses, frailties, and propensity to sin, in order to cleanse it and to turn it back into right relationship with God. The eternal life we long for—to know the Father and him whom he sent—is found only in Jesus Christ, for he took our flesh through death into the grave, and from there brought us up into new life.

We need to readjust our thinking when it comes to God, and quit focusing on getting everything right according to a particular standard we have come up with. Rather, our humanity and our way of existing finds its definition in the person of Jesus Christ. We quit being self-focused, even in seeing our faults and failures, and turn to Jesus and keep our eyes on him. Jesus Christ defines us—and he has made us right with God, bringing us up in to face-to-face union and communion with his Father in the Spirit. Trust in this reality—put your faith in him and not in anything else. And begin to participate in this reality in a real way—through fellowship with God and with others in the Spirit.

To walk in any other way than in the way Jesus walks is to walk in darkness or to live a lie. This is because there is no other way to live other than that which Jesus lives even now in the presence of his Father in the Spirit—he is the perfected human, worshiping his Father in Spirit and in truth. The One through whom and by whom all was created, has taken on our human flesh, lived our life, died our death, and risen again—bringing our glorified, resurrected human flesh into union and communion with his Father in the Spirit. It is Jesus who offers our worship and prayer to his Father, and who gives us all the Father has for us in the Spirit.

There is only one way to live, and that is, to live “in Christ”. The reality is that every one of us, whether a believer in Christ or not, is going to fall short, to fail to live into the truth of who we are in Christ. That's why it's all up to Jesus and not up to us, to make sure we are growing and becoming all that God has created us to be. It is Jesus, the Judge and the One judged on the cross, who will ultimately decide our eternal fate. The issue now is fellowship—participating in the face-to-face union and communion with God through Christ in the Spirit right now and on

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into eternity. Will we live in the truth of this union and communion, and fully participate in Christ, in our new life in him? Or will we keep on living in denial of this reality, in a stubborn refusal to live in the Light, to walk in the truth of our existence? Will we insist on our own way, our own will, in spite of all Jesus has done to include us in God's life and love?

Lord, we are so often clueless when it comes to relationship and living in healthy ways with other human beings. And we certainly have no ability to live in right relationship with you, God. Thank you for all you have done for us, Jesus, and all you are doing now, and will do to transform, heal, and restore us. Grant us the grace to die in your death that we might live in your eternal life, now and forever, as our heavenly Father's beloved children in the Spirit. Amen.

"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." 1 John 1:1–2:2 NASB

"So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.' But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.' Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.' Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." John 20:19–31 NASB

"And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales

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and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need."
Acts 4:32–35 NASB

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