

## The Summer of Love Week 2: The Problem

**This is the Summer of Love 2023!** Actually, there's more to it. It's the summer of love, but also **unity and fellowship**. Why? This isn't **1969**, the actual summer of love. That summer, young people were looking for love, purpose, and truth and they weren't finding it in the culture. Many tried drugs that were supposed to expand their consciousness, but all that did was cause more problems. They tried putting their force toward protesting the war in Vietnam. The cry was "**make love not war**." And on that front, they also tried to cast aside all traditional values, including the sexual ones.

**There was another group** of young people looking for the same things, but they found the love of God and brothers and sisters through Jesus. This was called the **Jesus Revolution**.

**The Summer of Love, 2023, is about hearing God's voice about love for God, unity, and true fellowship within Jesus' new community, the Church.** We find all of this in **three short letters written by John the Apostle**. John was in Jesus' **inner circle**. He walked around Palestine watching everything Jesus did and listening to everything he said.

**John proved his allegiance to Jesus** by continuing his work, by **planting several churches** in Western Turkey near the city of Ephesus. **It is this John, the pastor, who writes to these churches when they are starting to break apart** from the inside because of an element who is promoting and **teaching a different gospel** than what **John, an eyewitness**, had presented to them when they first believed.

**Last week**, we read the first seven verses of 1 John, 1. If you are using **your journal and study guide**, you would have found that John used two of our keywords that we **are looking for**, "**Light**" and "**Fellowship**." If you don't have a study guide, I encourage you to get one so that you can dig deeper and hear God's voice more clearly. **It is pretty self-explanatory, but we do have a video** on our website that walks you through how to use it. It's well worth looking into.

You can look quickly and **see how often those two words are used**.

We pick up in chapter 1:8. As I read, follow along and mark any words or phrases that are repeated. <sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. <sup>2:1</sup> My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup> He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 1:8-2:2 ESV  
**What did you notice?**

**The goal is love, unity, and fellowship. The heart of the problem is sin. This goes deeper than the symptom. This is the infection. Here's what John is telling these splintering churches to do and what he is also telling us today.**

**Own your sin.** Owning one's sin means that you have come to terms with God's view of reality. Sin means we have fallen short of God's standard for holiness. Whether it be morally, ethically, or legally, sin is missing the mark of what God wants for us. I am taking responsibility saying as it were, "I did, thought, or said \_\_\_\_\_, it wasn't someone else's fault."

**These people do not believe that they have sinned and, therefore, do not believe that they need to be cleansed or forgiven.**

**Look back at the two different ways John speaks about "sin."**

V. 8..."If we say we have no sin"

V. 10..."If we say we have not sinned"

Sin in verse 8 refers to **something within us**. In verse 10, it is about **a specific act of sin**.

Bible scholar, Gary Burge, says it this way..."Thus, in 1 John 1:8, 'to have sin' likely refers to a quality of personhood, an active principle at work in someone's life. It is a disposition of the heart that lives in rebellion and constantly exhibits evil deeds (see further on 1:10)." 81

**Here's a way to understand the difference.** The first reference is "have no sin". This "have sin" is about a...**Predisposed toward: Sin.** (Big S sin)

**This is the sin path and separation from God that Adam and Eve started us down. This is something that is passed on to us. It is also something you are born into. It is that which exists before I've really done anything about yet you are drawn toward it. This is a product of a broken, flawed world that we are a part of. Nothing works as it should, relationships, government, death, disease, weather...**

**This is based upon selfishness, self-reliance, instead of trusting in a loving God who has provided what you need, not just what you want. That is why sin is described as rebellion against God's authority. "No one can tell me how to live my life."**

**Another way to describe this is being bent in the direction of continued separation and rebellion from God and the destruction that brings it in this world and the next.**

**This is why I called this "Big S sin."**

**I am bent toward depression, despair, and a sense that the worst will happen. That drives me to think thoughts that aren't helpful and to obsess on things that bother me. It can make me worry about myself and how I'm doing. This is just a part of my make up. It's just there and it's really easy for me to go down that worm hole where no good comes of it.**

**What are you bent toward that is about self-gratification or self-sufficiency? That's your "Sin".**

**That means that the next reference to sin, where it says, "If we say we have not sinned." This is where we are...Responsible for: sin. (Little s sin) This is something I have specifically done, said, or thought that goes against God's standard.**

**Let's say because of my bend toward depression, I go down that big S wormhole. On the way down, I ignore my wife's needs? Or because I feel bad about myself and exaggerate something good I have done to make myself look better, or something less than good, someone else did, but for the same reason. That is my "little s" sin. And for this I am responsible.**

**Let's say yours is alcohol and that helps you numb some pain or gives you the courage to be the person you want to be. That isn't something you are responsible for, but if you drink to the point of not being in control, you then are responsible for every rotten thing you do, say, and even think. Why is "think" a part of little s sin, because that is what opens the door for doing and saying.**

Here the commentator, **Burge**, reminds of the context that brings John to say these strong words about sin. "John is in debate, not necessarily with those who trivialized sin, but with those who philosophically question the relevance of sin as something that can impede our relationship with God. If spirituality is isolated from the commonplace events of everyday living, if the material things of the world are irrelevant to God, spiritual enlightenment might ignore mundane issues such as morality." 81-82

Let's read it one more time, the part about "little s" sin. **<sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. <sup>2:1</sup> My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup> He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 1:8-2:2 ESV**

**This brings us back to owning our own sin. These people are in a fantasy world and they are luring others into it. It's a theme park experience, where there is no big S and no little s sin and, therefore, nothing can impede our experiencing God on a spiritual level. There is no being bent away from God and there is no action, speech, or thought, or attitude that has any kind of fallout that destroys our relationship with God or with others. They promote this as "the happiest place on earth." They can't own it, because it doesn't exist.**

Another thing that happens in these **first verses of chapter 2**, is that **John switches who he is talking to**. Remember, he has two people he is talking to. **First, he is talking to these troublemakers, or Gnostics**, who believe that sin is a false construct and doesn't apply to them and the people in the church **who are in danger of believing them because they are unwise or weak**. That's why he begins with, "my little children."

What does John say that **people like them and people like us need to do** about sin and its effect on love, unity, and fellowship? He begins with **owning your sin**. The big s and most importantly the little s. Then we need to...**Trust your Advocate**.

**Who is our advocate?** Let's read verse one again and see. <sup>8</sup> **If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.** <sup>9</sup> **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** <sup>10</sup> **If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.** <sup>2:1</sup> **My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.** <sup>2</sup> **He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.** 1 John 1:8-2:2 ESV

**This advocate is describing a legal situation.** God, the father, is the **righteous judge** who has a standard for holiness. **If his standard is broken, that can't just be swept under the rug or God isn't a god of justice.** He's a **senile or granddad who makes excuses for his grandson** who strategically over-promises and under-delivers with women to get what he wants from them. Our advocate, or attorney, comes to the righteous judge and says, **"yes, Bill is guilty of ignoring his wife and talking bad about others, but I have taken on the punishment that your justice demands. And now he belongs to me, and I will make him new."**

**Do you trust Jesus to speak and act on your behalf?** The only other option is to try really hard to make yourself worthy of **God's forgiveness**. The latter sounds exhausting.

This is where a different advocate says, **"forgive him because he can't help himself or forgive because he'll try harder next time.** That's the right out of law school public defender instead of Jeffrey Fieger. That is when we try to **play our own advocate**.

Or we can be our own advocate and say, **"This is a farce, because I haven't done anything wrong that should keep me out of heaven.**

**What does John say that people like them and people like us need to do** about sin and its effect on love, unity, and fellowship? He begins with **owning your**

sin. The big S and, most importantly, the little s. Then we need to...**Trust your Advocate.** This next one is so **simple and yet so powerful** for helping us experience love, unity, and fellowship. Be...**Grateful for debt relief.**

**What do I mean by debt relief?** Let's read verse 2 again. **<sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. <sup>2:1</sup> My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup> He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 1:8-2:2 ESV**

**What in the world does propitiation mean?** I looked it up and this is what it said: Propitiation means **averting the wrath of God by the offering of a gift.** Not sure why the **ESV** translators used that word, since no one uses that word and, therefore, no one knows what it means. Here's how the **NIV** translates it:

**He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:2 NIV**

**This is Jesus and through his death he paid the debt that our sin carries.** Again, the **proof that sin is real** and not like John's opponents describe it is, that it has fallout. **Because we are "responsible" for our little s sins we must pay for the negative things that it causes.**

Did you know that retailers **add 10-20%** on the prices of what we buy because people steal. This is an easy way to see the price tag for sin. **It's a very tangible price tag.** But the irony is that the person stealing pays the same inflated price when they don't steal.

All sin has a **price tag.** **What it costs in this world and the next.** A big part of the price is that it **separates us from a holy and loving God.** Then it causes damage to me and those around me in this world.

In the **Old Testament, which is the pre-Jesus part** of the Bible, God begins teaching people that sin carries a price tag in this world and the next. He did this by setting up a **system of sacrifices** where animals and grain were given, and it was

how that costs the giver that provided the lesson. It also prepares them to hear that it is through the blood of another perfect sacrifice that we are saved from paying this price and we are cleansed.

My depression big S and my negative responses to it, my little s has had an effect on my wife, kids, and the churches where I have served. That's just a fact. That carries a price tag. I can't pay for that, but Jesus did.

Jesus provides a one time and continuing debt relief program. Some of the fallout in this world I must live with, but the separation from God is bridged, and I get his presence that can change me and help redeem the damage my sin has done.

The one's John opposed didn't need an advocate nor did they need anyone to pay their debt because their sin was not affecting their relationship with God. In other words, they didn't need to be forgiven. That is the fear when we forgive someone who has hurt us. We fear that if we were to tell them we have forgiven them, we will look stupid when they say, "Ok, but there really was no need because I didn't do anything wrong. If that's what you need to do for yourself then fine, but it's nothing to do with me."

If you've ever been under heavy financial debt, you know that the place these people are living in is a fantasy. It's heavy. When we owed 6 figures on this facility and property, it did a number on many of us. Until we stopped living in fear and scarcity and God miraculously paid it off. But it is like carrying an elephant around.

Are you grateful for your debt being paid?

For those who have arrived and who don't need forgiveness, then they will never need this next part of what John is challenging us to do about the heart of the problem, our sin. But in my world, this is the most powerful answer to my sin destroying love, unity, and fellowship. Let me warn you you're gonna hate this one. It's medicine we don't want to take, but if we take it, it will make us better...Confess often.

<sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse

**us from all unrighteousness.** <sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. <sup>2:1</sup> My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup> He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 1:8-2:2 ESV

**This is really a part of owning your own sin. Where we agree with what God calls reality. To confess is to agree with what God already knows is true and real.**

**This is where we stop making excuses. We stop trying to walk it back. We stop trying to spin it until it doesn't sound that bad. This is where we stop saying, "if \_\_\_\_\_ hadn't done \_\_\_\_\_, this would have never happened."**

**We stop calling it a situation, like it's separate from me. No, it's a sin, and I did it.**

**It is like exhaling. We breathe in what God gives us and then we exhale what is not of God. We acknowledge what it really is and that it needs to go, then it cannot fester and spread within us.**

**Breathing in and out is natural. We don't need to think about it. Right now, I have to think about and then be reminded that I need to confess. God wants to help us get to the point that it just happens. We, without self-berating, which does no good, we call it what it is and smile and say, "God how can you be so good as to continually forgive me?" Then with the same smile I say to myself, "there I go again, that's the old dead Bill, I'm not a slave to that anymore."**

**Listen to how the prophet Isaiah describes confession as "happy." And not confessing as dry and heavy. How happy he is whose wrong-doing is forgiven, and whose sin is covered! <sup>2</sup> How happy is the man whose sin the Lord does not hold against him, and in whose spirit there is nothing false. <sup>3</sup> When I kept quiet about my sin, my bones wasted away from crying all day long. <sup>4</sup> For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was dried up as in the hot summer. <sup>5</sup> I told my sin to You. I did not hide my wrong-doing. I said, "I will tell my sins to the Lord." And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Psalm 32:1-5 NLT**



**Confession is connected to the past, what Jesus did for us on the cross. But confession is really about the future, what Jesus wants to do in us and how he wants to use us in this broken world. Lack of confession affects our ability to be transformed into the likeness of Christ and it affects our ability to be his ambassadors to this culture.**

**We cannot truly be disciples who follow Jesus, are being changed by Jesus, and committed to Jesus' mission, without confessing often. We cannot be sent without confession.**

**This is where we do something about this. It's not enough to understand sin better. It's time to obey or follow Jesus and that John describes...*Stepping into the Light.***

**It has become clear to me that this is our **theme verse** for this series. *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. 1 John 1:7* This might make a good tattoo, T-shirt, or bumper sticker.**

**Stepping into the light is another way of describing the first step of obedience to what Jesus is saying to you.**

**1. Remember and praise your advocate.**

**Lead people into a time of confession before coming to his table for communion. I'm going to leave some space for you to exhale and confess what you need to before you come to praise and remember Jesus, your advocate. This is where we remember what he has done for us as our advocate to set us free from debt. (Say this phrase as they pick up the elements, "Trusting in Jesus your debt is paid.")**

**2. Leave like you've been sent.**

**This is the challenge to walk out the door with the attitude that you are sent to make the kingdom present to others. Seal your commitment by touching the banner.**