October 11/12, 2025

Relationships and Trajectories

Face to Face Series

1 John 3:1-10

Tyce Jensen (President of the Berean Fellowship)

Well good morning, everyone. It's good to see you. Let me introduce myself. My name is Tyce Jensen, and I am President of the Berean Fellowship of Churches, and it is such a joy to be here today. I've been President of the Berean Fellowship for one year. Previous to that, I pastored in a town you may have heard of called Broken Bow, Nebraska. Apparently, stories are told about Broken Bow, Nebraska regularly from this stage. That was my home church. The Lord has a weird sense of humor. I pastored there for a little over ten years. Then a year ago, the Lord led us to take the presidency. My wife and I and four of our five kids (Our oldest is in college.) moved here to Lincoln just this summer. So this is now my home church, since July. It's been really good being here. It's just been really great to meet all of you, and I'm excited to open up God's Word today.

A little bit about the Berean Fellowship. (We'll show it on that map up on the screen.) So the Berean Fellowship of Churches is a network of 56 churches in the United States, and we like to use the word interdependent. It's a network where we choose to be in relationship with each other because we believe that we are better together, and interdependent community Christianity is better than Lone Ranger Christianity. We believe that in the individual level that it's better for you to be interdependent, and it's also important at the corporate level that we enter interdependent relationships with other churches for encouragement, for fellowship, for advice, for accountability. So that is the Berean Fellowship of Churches, and as Jacob mentioned earlier, we also have several churches in South Asia, and then we have one in Bogota, Colombia which they're going to be making a trip to this spring.

So I would just like to tell you a little bit about myself with a picture on the screen here. (A picture of a delicious looking steak meal). So I grew up in Nebraska, and I love steak…I love steak! Now I wonder what the steak tasted like for the prodigal son. Now you may be like, "Ah, Tyce, it doesn't say anything about steak." Well, they killed a fatted calf. Okay, so if you want to roll with brisket, that's cool…roll with brisket. But what did that taste like? I mean, think about it. Just the day before he'd been in rags; he didn't have shoes. Remember his dad sees him and says, "Hey, put shoes on his feet." Now, if you don't remember the story, or don't know the story, basically he said to his father, "You know what? I don't care if you're alive; I'm going to do my own thing. Give me my share of the money." The father gave him his share of the money and then he went and he blew it all on wild living and prostitutes. He comes to the end of himself eventually, after a long period of time, realizing, "This isn't working. You know what? In my father's house, even the day workers have enough to eat, and here I am starving. Maybe, just maybe my father will have grace on me and accept me back as like a day laborer, right?" And so he comes back and his mind is blown, because while he's still a long way off, his father sees him, and the Bible says **he has compassion**,

like he's moved in his guts. And he runs to the son, and before he can hardly even get his speech out, he wraps his arms around him, and he kisses him, and he says, "Put the family ring on him. You belong again. Put the best robe on him. Oh, by the way, brisket and steak tonight!" Right? So he's sitting there, and his head has got to be spinning. He's wearing the best robe. It says later on that the dancing was loud, which I would love to know what that looked like. Remember the brother? The older brother is outside. He heard the dancing. It was a pretty crazy, awesome party. So I bet that steak tasted pretty good…pretty good!

Now I want to ask you a question. Have you experienced the feast of the Father? Have you experienced what it's like to be forgiven and invited back into the welcome of the Father's house? Have you ever experienced that? The feast of the Father? I think when you taste of it, you say something like, "*How great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we…that I…should be called again a child of God.*" When you experience the feast of the Father, it changes your life trajectory. That's the theme for today. So let me say it again. When you experience the feast of the Father, it changes your life trajectory, and we're going to see that from the book of 1 John. So if you guys would turn in your Bibles or your phone Bibles or tablet Bibles, or whatever it is, to 1 John, Chapter 3.

Now if you're new with us, we've been making our way through the book of 1 John. John is an apostle. He spent several years with Jesus, and his mind was blown by how amazing Jesus is, how joyful Jesus was, how forgiving Jesus was, how He took sin deadly serious, and yet at the same time, He understood forgiveness and grace and the feast of the Father. So then he wants everyone to experience that. But these churches that John is writing to, they're threatened by false teachers who say, "You know, it doesn't matter how you live. It's not really about relationship. It's about doing the right thing, maybe the little right religious ritual, and then you can go and kind of live however you want." And John's like, "No, you're missing the point!" So let's look at verse 1 in 1 John 3, verse 1:

> **See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.** (*NASB, 1 John 3:1)

Now, notice the passage starts with relationship. In a few verses it's going to say some hard things about sin, but we get to soak ourselves in the relationship here first. See **how great a love**, like John is struggling to describe the word **great** in Greek. It is like trying to come up with a category for how amazing something is. **See how great a love the Father has** for us, that we, who wasted all of God's money, should be called when we believe in Jesus, when we come back through Jesus to the Father, **that we would be called children of God.** Now we need to soak ourselves in the bigger story here, okay?

So, in the beginning God created the universe. Now here's a really important detail. God created the universe to be God-centered. Did you know that? That's a really important detail, okay? The universe is not man-centered with God blessing us. The universe is God-centered. Now the reason

that's important is because later on, it's going to talk a lot about sin. Sin is not simply breaking rules from an arbitrary far-off God. No, you were created to live a God-centered life, and the universe was created to be God-centered. And when we sin, it's literally tearing the fabric of the universe and its purposes. It's not just breaking rules. It is breaking rules, but it's so much more. It's breaking relationship.

So, God created Adam and Eve to live in perfect intimacy with Him, spreading His kingdom, spreading His joyful kingdom, spreading His joyful will over the earth. But then along comes the tempter. Now, the important detail is that God placed one limitation on Adam and Eve's life, just one limitation, and that was, "***You are not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil***." Now, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is basically the idea that, "I know good and evil better than God." In other words, I know what's good for my life better than God. But God says, "Don't go there." But Satan, who Jesus calls ***the father of lies*****,** he comes along and he says, "You know what? Would a good God really put limitations on your life?" (That's a lie I struggle with, right? Would a good God really put limitations on your life?") And then he starts appealing to their desires. The fruit looks pretty good. It doesn't make sense why a good God would put that off limits. You know, I'm not entirely sure I know what's better for my life. I know what's good and evil for my life better than God. And so Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, and they sin, and the fabric of the universe was torn in many ways. They were set on a trajectory. Listen very closely! They were set on a trajectory of "me-centeredness", and so all of us in this room were born into a trajectory of me-centeredness.

My children—I have five of them..it was amazing—and all five of them were born on a trajectory of me-centeredness. We need a savior. We can't just pay God back for a few broken rules. No, no! We can't fix the universe and put it back together again, together ourselves with our own effort. We can't! We need a savior! So God, in His amazing plan, sent the Second Person of the Trinity, who put on human flesh in order to fix the brokenness that you and I created. And when He died on the cross, it paid for the sins of those who would believe. And if you believe in Jesus, you're invited back to the Father, because your sins are forgiven by what Jesus did on the cross. And when you believe in Jesus, when you begin to see that—you know what?—there's a feast available to me through the Father, through forgiveness, and it changes your life trajectory…changes your life trajectory! Now look at Verse 2:

> **Beloved, now we are children of God,**

Again, he's writing to those who've believed in Jesus, those who've put their faith in Jesus, so Christians.

> **Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears,** (the Lord Jesus) **we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him** (on Jesus) **purifies himself, just as He is pure.** (*NASB, 1 John 3:2-3)

Notice that being a child of God sets you on a trajectory, right? Before you meet Jesus, before you surrender to Jesus in faith, you're on a me-centered trajectory. But when you meet Jesus, your trajectory changes, and where is it headed according to Verse 2? Look at it again:

> **Beloved**, **now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He** (the Lord Jesus) **appears, we will be like Him,**

Ah, the trajectory is to become more and more like Jesus! If you're trusting in Jesus, your future is magnificent…it's magnificent! You're going to become like Jesus. Now, the Bible has an important word for this process of becoming like Jesus, and it's *sanctification*. Sanctification! Now sometimes we define sanctification as *growth in holiness,* which sounds really dry. It's true. Okay, it's true, but a better way to think of it is that you're growing to be like Jesus. When you meet Jesus, you realize that holiness is not boring. Have you ever met Him? ("I'm not sure I'd like to become like Jesus.") Have you ever met Him? What joy…what joy! What a relaxed presence He had. Do you know why He was relaxed? He had perfect connection and intimacy with the Father. And when you believe in Jesus, that starts to open up to you as well. You can grow to be like Jesus, to walk daily in growing relationship and dependent intimacy with the Father…grow to be like Jesus! Ah…and this is the trajectory God sets us on when we become Christians. And when Christ comes back, which it talks about in the end of verse 2, the sanctification will be complete. We're going to see Him, and the work will be finished. "Come quickly, Lord Jesus…come quickly, Lord Jesus!" Now let's keep going in the passage. Verse 4:

> **Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.**

What is practicing sin? Think in terms of trajectory. Practicing sin is being on a trajectory, not of rule breaking, but a trajectory of me-centeredness, more and more and more. And then he uses this weird word, **lawlessness**. Now this word isn't used very often in the New Testament, but when it is, it's used of like *deliberate me-centeredness.* It's saying to God, "Nope, my kingdom come. Nope, my will be done." Listen to me. Everyone in this room has a problem, including me. And then when I wake up in the morning, I usually say to God, "My kingdom come; my will be done," and I need my trajectory changed, right? Now he says, "Those who practice have a trajectory of me-centeredness. They **practice lawlessness**, which is deliberate me-centeredness." But the good news is verse 5:

> **You know that He** (Again the **He** here is the Lord Jesus.), **appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him, there is no sin.**

Now think about this word, **take away**. The Lord Jesus **appeared to take away sins**. What does that mean? Well, this exact same word is used by John the Baptist back in the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 29. When John the Baptist saw the Lord Jesus, he said, "**Behold, the Lamb of God who…takes away** (exact same Greek word) **the sin of the world**." So the Lord Jesus knows that you have a forgiveness problem. You can't work your way back to God, so He dies on the cross on your behalf. You were created for intimacy with the Father, but you can't have intimacy

with the Father without forgiveness. So the Lord Jesus comes; He dies on the cross and offers you forgiveness. And if you believe in Jesus, you move from orphan to adopted child. You move from death to life. You now have open intimacy with the Father. But that's not all that the Lord Jesus came to take away. Not just to give us initial forgiveness, but also this lifelong process of sanctification, of heart change! The Lord Jesus rose from the dead, and He sends us the Holy Spirit. When you believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes and seals you and begins to change your heart loves. Because my deepest problem is that I love my own kingdom, my own will, or John 3:19 says, **I love the darkness** so I need heart change. It's available through the Lord Jesus and His Holy Spirit. He comes to take away sin. That's talking about my life trajectory. So instead of a me-centered trajectory, He set me on a Lord Jesus-centered trajectory. So that's what it is talking about there in Verse 5. Now Verse 6:

> **No one who abides in Him** (abides in Jesus) **sins; and no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.**

Oh, that's terrifying…terrifying! Now it's time for a Greek grammar lesson. Hooray! I know that when you guys woke up this morning, "All right, get the kids, get in the car, now a great grammar lesson time, right?" You didn't know that was coming…but here it is. We need to talk about the word **sins**, because in the Greek, it's in the present tense. And here's what a big deal about that is. In Greek, the tense doesn't just show time; it shows the type of action. So when the Greek uses the present tense, oftentimes it talks about continual, repeated action. In fact, the ESV translates this verse, *cannot*. It says,

> **No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning;** (ESV, 1 John 3:6)

It's translating the Greek present tense as a trajectory, a trajectory. And I think that's correct. No one who abides in the Lord Jesus **keeps on** a trajectory of sin, and no one who keeps on a trajectory of sin, has seen Him or knows Him. Now this is not saying that Christians never sin. When we believe in Jesus, sanctification is a messy process. Now, one of the things that's important is earlier in the book of 1 John, it says:

> **If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.** (But) **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** (ESV, 1 John 1:8-9)

So this verse is not contradicting us, especially when you understand the Greek present tense. In fact, the Greek present tense is **if we confess**. You see, it's a lifestyle of regularly admitting that we fall short of God. We don't become saved again and again. But it's a, "Lord, I'm out of relationship with You, and I want to taste your feast again. I blew it, and I thank you for the Lord Jesus, that He came and died for me, and I need your forgiveness again." That's what confession is. It's agreeing with God, and the Greek present tense is used there in 1 John 1:9 as well. It's a trajectory of confession, of neediness and confession of sin. All right, let's keep going. Verse 7:

> **Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.** (1 John 3:7-8)

Now, again, when John says, "Let **no one deceive you**," he's taking a shot at these false teachers. And here's what they were saying. They said, "You know what? What you do with your body doesn't matter. You just need a little secret knowledge, maybe a secret little formula that you learn with God, and then you can live however you want." And John is saying, "No, that's not true. That's not true at all! In fact you're showing that you don't have relationship with the Father through those actions." He's saying, "Look at these guys' trajectory. It's not towards Christ-likeness. It's not increasing joy and peace and love for others. It's increasing me-centeredness and they're of the devil, of the devil. But you don't have to be like that. You are invited into the Feast of the Father. And in fact, in a crazy way, these false teachers are too, but they haven't tasted of it, so you need be careful of them." That's what John is saying here. Now Verse 9:

> **No one who is born of God practices sin,** (There's that trajectory of sin.)
> **No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed** (God's seed, by the power of the Holy Spirit) **abides in him; and he cannot sin,**
> Okay? There again the Greek present tense, I like the ESV here:
> **He cannot** (continue to) **keep on sinning,** (a trajectory of sin) **because he has been born of God.** (ESV, 1 John 3:9)

Those who are born again, those who have God's seed by the Holy Spirit abiding in them, cannot follow a lifelong trajectory of sin. This is a messy process. I know people who've trusted in Christ, and they truly trusted in Christ, but then for the next couple of years, they didn't get discipled and so they just fall right back into their pattern, their me-centered muscle memory—which we all have—right? A me-centered muscle memory. And then, because the Holy Spirit is abiding in them, eventually God woos them back to Himself. So it's a messy process, and sometimes it's hard to measure, right? But what he's saying here is that those who've been born again cannot follow a lifelong trajectory of sin. That doesn't mean that we don't sin. It means that when we sin, in fact growth in Christ-likeness is that we confess more and more quickly. It's what it is. And then we come back to the feast of the Father, and it starts to change our hearts. Verse 10:

> **By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness,** (That's a trajectory of Christ-likeness.) **is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.**

So if you have Jesus living inside of you, over time—it's not a perfect straight line—but over time, you will start to look like Jesus.

Okay, let's deal with a couple of maybe like questions you might be raising or objections you might have. All right, let's put them on the screen here. A possible objection. The first one is this: Well, Tyce, I thought

1) The goal of life was to get saved and then to avoid sin?
   Okay, I just want to quote for you. This is the wrong question, the wrong emphasis, okay? I want to describe for you salvation and eternal life from the words of Jesus in John 17, verse 3. He says: **This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**

Notice He puts it in terms of knowledge, which in Greek, is relationship. It's intimacy, not just brain knowledge, but heart-sharing and growing in relationship for another person, okay? So when you first believe in Jesus, you're saved; you're forgiven, but that's not the end goal. That's just the opening of the door to a rich life of feasting with the Father. And do you know what heaven is going to be like? It's not going to be avoiding sin. It's going to be a lot of feasting. Have you read it? It's going to be a lot of feasting.

Second objection, possible question:

2) How many sins must there be for me to know that someone is not saved?

Wrong question! Wait, is it 37 or 38? I saw my neighbor yesterday, and there were 38 yesterday, right? Satan loves sin measurement systems. Satan loves performance-based Christianity. Satan loves performance-based religion. This is about relationship.

Wrong question. Do they know the Father? I can't tell, but I want them to know the Father, right? Satan would love it if we all go around with rulers measuring each other's sin in this room. That would be destructive. It doesn't mean we don't take sin seriously. We do, and we even call it out in order to invite them back to the feast of the Father. Okay?

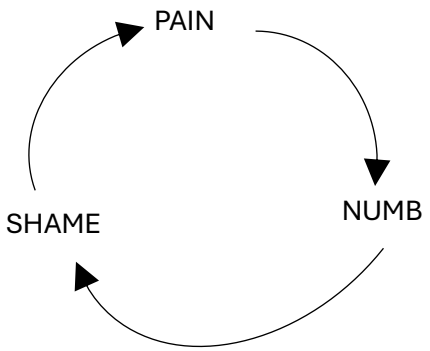
Third thing, let's make it more personal:

3) How many sins must there be for me to know that I'm not saved?

Wrong question…wrong question! If you're questioning your salvation, run to Jesus. Satan loves performance-based Christianity. Let me give you the heart of Jesus: **Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.** (ESV, Matthew 11:28)

So if you're struggling, "I'm not sure I'm saved," I want you to know that you are invited to the feast of the Father. You are! That comes through Jesus, comes through surrender, comes through confession of sin. But you are invited!

Now a sensitive area to talk about here would be addictions. What about people who struggle with addictions? Some of us in this room are struggling with an addiction. Some of us in this room are in the process of recovery from addiction. I would like to talk about that for just a moment. Satan, the father of lies, wants to speak lies into you in your struggle with addiction. Can we put the addiction cycle up on the screen?



From PAIN to NUMB OUT to SHAME and back to PAIN

So here's what it is. You have a **pain** or a difficulty, and then you find something that effectively **numbs it** for the short term. It never lasts very long. You have a pain, and you find something that numbs that pain—alcohol or pornography or opioids or your smartphone…not even kidding, right? And then you feel awful afterwards, and you go to the **shame** place. The shame place is that, "God doesn't love me. I'm a terrible person. If anyone knew what was true about me, they wouldn't love me. If God knew what was true about me, He wouldn't love me." That's the place of shame. But I want to speak to the place of shame to you, okay?

You're invited to the feast of the Father. Are you any worse than the prodigal son? Satan says, "Yes." God says, "Nope, nope! It was for you I sent my Son because I love you." So here's the wild and amazing part of the gospel. God knows the worst thing about you, and He loves you, and He invites you. Now He's going to work on those unbelieving parts, but He wants it to be done in a feast. He wants to speak to those unbelieving parts as you regularly taste of that feast. He wants to speak into your shame and give you a new identity. So we have it on the screen. How do we escape shame? How do we escape sin? We've got a big clue up on the screen for you. (Picture of that delicious steak meal again.) It's to feast with the Father. Go back to Verse 6 here. 1 John chapter 3 and verse 6: "**No one who abides in Jesus keeps on sinning."**

I want to focus on that word **abide**. **Abide** is one of Jesus' favorite words that John captures in John chapter 15, and even it happens multiple times in the letter of 1 John. It's a really important key to the Christian life, in Jesus' thinking and in John's thinking. What is abiding? It's *regularly slowing down, hearing the voice of the Father and feasting.* It's what it means to **abide**. To regularly slow down, to hear the voice of the Father and to eat of His goodness. He's going to speak into your shame. He's going to speak into your pain. And sometimes—listen closely—sometimes it's surgery, okay? Surgery is no fun, and we all recoil from surgery. But when God does surgery,

it's always on your heart. It's always for greater health later on and for greater feasting later on. He's a good Father…He's a good Father! I just want to speak a verse over you to show you and remind you of God's heart of invitation for you. It's Revelation, chapter 3 verse 20. The Lord Jesus says this: **Behold, I stand at the door and** ("I'm knocking, Tyce's translation.")

> **Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and** (Do you know what the next part says?) **eat with him.**
>
> (ESV, Revelation 3:20)

And guess what's on the menu? (Steak picture!) And if you're a vegetarian, imagine something else that's really delicious and joyful. I'm serious. If you're a vegetarian, imagine what the most joyful dish is. God has it prepared for you. It's His heart towards you. For me, it's steak. It's God's heart towards me, even though I need so much grace. I mess up so often. And the amazing part is that His heart towards me is: it's steak. It's beautiful. It's what abiding is.

Now, one last thing. We all need help in our abiding process. God said **It's not good for man to be alone**. And even after you become a Christian, you need help in your abiding process. I need help in my abiding process. I'm not godly enough to live the Christian life by myself. I'm not. No one in this room is. So you might need someone to help you to learn how to abide. Maybe that's in your Life Group. Maybe there's someone that can help me take the next step in abiding. Maybe I need to go courageously and ask them. I know there's even a class here called Spiritual Transformation, and that's mainly as I've taught. Look through it. It's about learning how to abide with Jesus, but it has to be done in community as well. So I just want to speak over all of you that, "You are invited to the feast of the Father." Let me pray.

> *Lord God, thank You for Your goodness. Oh, may we taste of it; may we taste of Your goodness and may we be changed. And may we then have a heart of grace, that we're receiving Your grace, and we want others, we want our neighbors to taste of Your grace. We want people in Bogota, Colombia, to taste of Your grace and help us to join You on what You're calling us to do, inviting people into relationship. We ask this for Jesus' glory, Amen.*

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Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512
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FALL 2025 // WEEK 6

Life Group Questions

1 John – Face to Face // October 11-12, 2025

Relationships and Trajectories // 1 John 3:1-10

Introduction

This week John brings us into an important discussion of our identity as children of God and how that should play out in our lives, particularly when it comes to our struggle with sin. As has been a theme in John's writings, abiding plays a key role in this discussion. As you read this passage and discuss it with your Life Group, pay attention to what is coming up in your thoughts. Do you sense encouragement, challenge, pressure, or condemnation? What might the Holy Spirit be saying to you through this?

Study Questions *(to complete on your own)*

1) Read 1 John 3:1-10 in a couple of different versions (especially the ESV). **How could a believer misunderstand or misinterpret 1 John 3:1-10?**

2) **What does John say is true about the recipients of this letter in verses 1-3?**

3) **Go through this passage and list everything it teaches about sin.**

4) **In two or three sentences, summarize the main points of 1 John 3:1-10.**

Discussion Questions *(with your group)*

1) In 1 John 3:1-3 John is using the imagery of us being born of God/children of God. **What trajectory does John expect the children of God to be on?**

Why do you think John spends so much time comparing a Christian's relationship with God to that of a Beloved Child/Father in verses 1-3?

2) In 1 John 3:4-10, the NASB uses the phrase "practices sin" to express the idea of a continuing/regular action to indicate sinning as a lifestyle, a way of life. **Is John saying that if you commit a sin, you are not born of God?** (Hint: Look at 1 John 1:6-2:2)

Why is it important to remember that John is speaking of patterns and trajectories of sin, rather than individual sins?

3) **What is the key to overcoming sin?** (Look at 1 John 3:6).

How does abiding/Feasting with the Father help us overcome sin? (Look at 1 John 2:24, 2:27-28)

4) Pastor Tyce said, "Those who experience the feast of the Father will have their life trajectories changed." How does this image help you in your relationship with God in the following areas?
Growing in love for Christ and His Kingdom

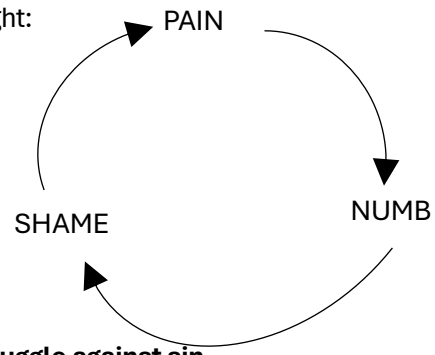
More regularly confessing sin and repenting

Living in a trajectory of regular victory over sin

What does "feasting with the Father" look like in your life?

5) In Pastor Tyce's message he described the addiction cycle as drawn to the right:

- We experience **PAIN** (or loss or a desire for something that is missing).
- We seek out something other than God to **NUMB** (or cope) with the pain.
- That other thing doesn't satisfy us, and **SHAME** enters our lives and lies to us about our identity as children of God.
- And the cycle repeats itself.



Before we trusted Christ for salvation, we were all addicted to sin. **In your struggle against sin when do you find yourself in this cycle?**

What did Pastor Tyce say we need to do when we find ourselves in this cycle?

6) This passage does not give us permission to go around suspiciously measuring everyone's sins, determining whether they are truly saved. **Why is asking, *"how many sins must there be for me to know that someone (including myself) is not saved?"*, the wrong question and wrong emphasis?**

We learn best how to feast with the Father *in community*. **How can your Life Group help you to grow in feasting with the Father?**

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so that we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit— we invite you to strengthen your souls with exercises that challenge and stretch you in new ways. Choose one and commit to repeating it until you gain strength in that area.

1) **Scripture Reading: to listen and soak in the Word as an experience of the words washing over you.** Read or listen to the entire letter of 1 John at least twice/week. As you take it in, resist the impulse to study and parse the details. The point is not to gain "head knowledge" but a stirring in the heart as the Holy Spirit brings the Word to life in you.

2) **Memorization: to internalize God's Word.** A key passage for this series is ***1 John 4:7-14***. Commit to memorize it yourself and encourage others in your group to do it with you.

3) **Walk & Pray: to actively engage with the scripture passage.** Write out the passage of the sermon each week on a note card and take it with you on a daily walk.

4) **Journal Reflection: to practice remembering what God has done.** Make time in your schedule to put down in writing the feelings and thoughts that are stirring as you interact with the Word of God.

5) **Self-control Exercise: to help you come to stillness from a busy or hurried pace of life.** Set a timer for 10 minutes. Sit upright but comfortably in a chair with your palms open and upward on your lap. Focus on a word or short phrase about the character of God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. When your thoughts wander to the things on your to-do list or other people's needs, redirect them back to the character of God. When the 10 minutes is up, close in a short prayer of gratitude.

Prayer

Praying together in a group is different than praying alone with God. It's a conversation that can help you grow closer to each other as you are in God's presence. One way to pray follows this often-used pattern in scripture – acknowledge who God is, recognize the need we have for Him, and ask to partner with Him on behalf of others. When possible, use the passage of scripture from this week's sermon as your starting point, then form a prayer that follows this pattern:

God, our Father, this week we learned that you are _____ and _____ .

As I looked into your Word, I understood how I need you to _____. Help me to be faithful to _____ in the week ahead.

Other people are on my heart, and I trust that you have put them there for a reason. I ask for your will to be accomplished in their life as they _____. Help me to know how to respond well to the needs of _____, even as my first step is in praying for them right now.

Each group engages in prayer differently. Some groups go around and allow anyone to pray that desires to do so. Other groups have several people pray or maybe 1 person closes the group in prayer. Still other groups split into smaller groups of 2-3 people and those people pray for each other. How you choose to engage in prayer is dependent on your group and your choice to ENGAGE! **We learn to pray by praying and by listening and praying with others!**