Game Changers

Sometimes the Smallest Words Leave the Biggest Impact

Weekly Title: The Consequential IF of John

Date: October 11, 2026

Text: 1 John 1:5-2:2

BIG IDEA

The word "if" appears 1,637 times in the Bible, 602 times in the New Testament, and 20 times in 1 John alone. As a function of our language, "if" introduces a condition, a condition in which a specific outcome rests. For example, “IF there is lightning, then there is thunder” or “IF the light is off, then the room is dark”.

In 1 John 1:5–2:2, John uses a series of “IF” statements to address a fundamental spiritual reality: the vast divide between the glorious light of God and the deep darkness within us.

On our own, our sinful nature creates an unbridgeable chasm between us and a holy God. We cannot cross this divide by pretending the darkness isn’t there or by creating our own light. We need a bridge. A way to step out of darkness and into the light.

Conversation Starter

- What are ways that you believe people (outside of Christianity) try to earn heaven?
- What are other examples in Scripture that you can think of that are “IF” statements?

COMMENTARY #1

1 John 1:5-7 John establishes the foundation of His message with the truth of God: God is light. Light represents God's purity, truth, and holiness. This truth reveals God as being holy (set apart) as His character is fundamentally opposed to ours. He is built on a nature of goodness, while we have a nature of sin.

The condition (“if we claim…”) sets up a call to realness. True fellowship with God inevitably shapes our direction. Walking in the light doesn't mean sinless perfection, but rather open, transparent living before God and community. And a striving towards holy living. To be in a right relationship with God requires aligning our nature with His. John makes it clear that we cannot claim to be in alignment with God while living in habitual darkness.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to walk in the light for your own life?
2. Why is it important to live in authenticity with each other?
3. What characteristics of God’s light do you want to live out in your own life?

COMMENTARY #2

1 John 1:8-10 In this section, John addresses our internal reality by acknowledging our sin nature. He states that each of us have a sin nature and have fallen short of the standard of holiness. However, John also balances this warning with a powerful conditional promise: *IF we confess our sins*, God acts according to His faithful and just character. Confession means agreeing with God about our sin rather than minimizing or rationalizing it. The result of genuine confession is complete forgiveness and ongoing purification.

John is not claiming that we will become perfect from an Earthly standard, but we all will be perfected in God's eyes if we confess and repent from our sins.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between feeling guilty of and confessing our sins?
2. Why is it important to note that God's forgiveness comes from Him being "faithful and just"?
3. Why do you think some people try to avoid our sin nature and try to cover it up?

COMMENTARY #3

1 John 2:1-2 The standard for the believer is clear; we are called to repent and confess our darkness and embrace the light of God. John writes *so "that we may not sin"*–in this statement he implies

that we have a hope of not sinning and the message he shares is that hope. However, knowing human weakness, John goes on to introduce the conditional statement "*But if anybody does sin…*"

Here, John shows us the bridge across the divide: when we stumble, we are not left without hope. We have Jesus Christ, serving as our Advocate before the Father. He does not defend our sin; He presents His own atoning sacrifice as the bridge that brings us back into fellowship with God.

Discussion Questions

1. How does knowing we have an advocate both keep us from the desire to sin and giving up and continuing to sin?
2. How does Jesus's status as the righteous one, parallel our state?
3. How does understanding Jesus's role impact our call to evangelism?

GOING DEEPER

The seven "IF" statements in 1 John 1:5-2:2 function as a spiritual diagnostic tool. They strip away denial, confront our self-deception, and direct us straight to the bridge of God's mercy in Christ. We are not called to pretend we are perfect, nor are we called to remain trapped in darkness. Instead, we are invited to cross over into an honest, ongoing walk in the light, supported by the blood of Jesus, sustained by confession and community, and defended by our heavenly Advocate.

FAMILY CURRICULUM
GAME CHANGERS: The Consequential IF of 1 John
1 John 1:5-2:2

BIG IDEA

For the next three weeks, we will be studying three passages and focusing on three little words that have a BIG impact. These words are: *if*, *all*, *and*. We will see how paying attention to these little words shows us how important they are.

This week's passage comes from 1 John 1:5 -2:2. John (the same John who wrote the gospel of John) is getting older as he writes and is an eye-witness to Jesus. He was Jesus' disciple and writes from the perspective of experiencing Jesus. John's letter is being sent to Christians to give them assurance and confidence in the true beliefs of the faith.

MEMORY VERSES

7 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. ~1 John 1:7

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

1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. ~2 John 2:1-2

LESSON/ACTIVITY

You are familiar with if/then statements. *If you practice your instrument, then you can play the song. If it stops raining, then we can play pickleball.*

Take a few minutes to name some more if/then statements that you have heard or said.
Now, take another look at our three memory verses and explain what will happen (hint: there is no *then*, but it is implied - meaning that it tells us what will happen without using the word *then*).

7 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. ~1 John 1:7

If we walk in the light, what will happen?

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

If we confess our sins, what will happen?

1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. ~2 John 2:1-2

If we sin, what will happen?

SONGS

"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" and *"In Christ Alone"*

PRAYER

Dear Father, You are the Light of the world and we want your light to shine through us. We confess that we have sinned and are so thankful to know that your sacrifice has covered our sins and that we are forgiven. Help us to walk closely with you each day. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

CHALLENGE

Pay attention to the little words! Remember that when we walk in the light, we have fellowship with other believers, and most of all Jesus!