

2018 Lenten Message Series: “I Give Up” Overview

Series: Core Strength

Series Text: 1 John 4:7-8 “Dear friends, let’s love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. ... God is love.”

Series Overview: We have given ourselves to God “At the Rail.” We have surrendered (“I Give Up!”) those parts of our lives that keep us from God’s plan for us. Now we work our cores (“Work Your Core”). This means we focus on and build the core [spiritual] strength that is the center of who we are, whose we are, and all that we do in and for God. That core is God’s love in us! To work our cores, we invite God to give us His love, we strengthen that love through toning and conditioning, and we exercise that love in how we relate to God and to others around us.

Series Method: We will read through, study, and apply the book of 1 John as a church, both in Sunday morning messages and in the church-wide small groups. It will be a seven week series, with an introduction week, one week for each of the five chapters of 1 John, and a conclusion week where we will take the core learnings of 1 John as a foundation for our lives with Jesus. We will read through a daily devotional book of reflections on 1 John, the book *This Is How We Know* (The Seedbed Daily Text: 1 John) by J.D. Walt.

SUNDAY, APRIL 15:

Title: Core Strength 2: “Partial Commitment Doesn’t Cut It!”

Message Overview: John is calling Jesus’ followers to stop being a partial Christian and take seriously the calling to not sin. John uses the dual images of lies and truth, sin and holiness, not keeping His commandments and obedience, old and new commandments, light and darkness, hate and love. There it is again: love! Our calling is to love like Jesus: live and walk like Jesus lived and walked. Yet Jesus just isn’t an example of holy living, He is the one who makes us able to. It is His love in us that makes us able to live out our love.

Scripture: 1 John 1:8-2:11 (Book 4-10, 7 lessons)

Text: & Memory Verse: 1 John 1:9 “But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we’ve done wrong.”

Skit: Training with Bobby Buff (Personal Trainer: At the Gym) (Andrew & Matt L.)

Blurb: Liar, liar, pants on fire! It's interesting that this child's rhyme says that when we lie, it not only put us in trouble, but it becomes something that everyone else can see clearly! Our faith in Jesus is like wearing pants! When we follow Him, our legs walk in His footsteps. When we claim to follow Him, but our footsteps don't walk in His, then everyone else can see it: our pants are on fire! This Sunday we'll find out how to put out the fire, stop lying, and walk in Jesus.

WORSHIP OUTLINE:**Opening Song:** Hymn sing -Andrew**Welcome:** -Pastor David

Good morning!

Where were you all last week?

What different weather one week can make! 62 degrees today! We're having church!!

Welcome to Forest Hills Church!

Where we love God and others, grow in Christ, and serve in the power and leading of the HS

My name is David Werner, and I'm the pastor here at Forest Hills Church

A special welcome to those who are here for the first time.

We invite you to stop by the welcome center on your way out and get a mug.

We want you to know that here your cup runs over with blessings from God!

We love kids at Forest Hills, and so this serve is intended for kids, too.

We think you'll find this service not only fun, but also helping you grow, spiritually.

We have bags for you to explore, and an activity table in the back.

We're using the same bulletin as last week...not wanting to waste them. So, changes you need to know about: Date, Lifeline, etc.

Adding our missionaries! Parker and Megan Ask will also be sharing.

PP: Memory Verse:

"But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we've done wrong." -1 John 1:9

Memory Verse:

Let's try it together...

Greeting Time

We haven't done this in a while, but I want to invite you to spend a minute and greet those around you. Tell them you're glad they're here! After all, they weren't here last week!

Worship Music Set: - Sanctify*Your Love Defends Me**Simple Pursuit* (Kids: scavenger hunt)*Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)*

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Lifeline Video:

David: Staying connected to the Vine: Lifeline!

Video

Prayers: (David)

Prayer concerns added to the bulletin: Carolyn Coby.

Psalm 23 (KJV). *UMH #137*

Serve Moment: (5-8 minutes) Parker & Megan Ask, Missionaries for Operation Mobilization
2 years in South Africa, now heading to Canada.
Will be the featured missionaries at Red Rock Camp.

Training with Bobby Buff (Andrew & Matt)

Offering: *God is Love* -Sanctify

Message: Core Strength 2: “Partial Commitment Doesn’t Cut It!”

Bumper Video

PP#1: Core Strength: Partial Commitment Doesn’t Cut It!

“But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we’ve done wrong.” -1 John 1:9

Core Strength: “Partial Commitment Doesn’t Cut It!” 1 John 1:9 “But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we’ve done wrong.”

PP#2: *Image of the scroll quote at:*

https://www.rosicrucian.org/images/digest2_2011/01_rosicrucian_manuscript.jpg

I fear that we tend to lean a little gnostic.

Gnosticism is a half-baked Christian-looking teaching from the time of the early Church. It claimed that Jesus didn’t die to take away our sins. Instead, it taught that His death released His spiritual form from its physical body, and He was then able to teach the true Gnosis, or knowledge, that sets us all free from the physical world. This Gnosis lies deep within us, and must be set free.

It didn’t take long for this alternative Christian teaching to develop and spread. In fact, by about 50 years after Jesus’ death, it starts to gain ground. We know about it today through the gnostic writings of the second century, from books written after the Bible, but have made so much news in the past couple of decades, like: *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Jude*, *The Gospel of Phillip*, and other *Nag Hammadi* texts. Conspiracy theorists claim this was the true Christian teaching, and that the Church tried to cover it up...even though these writings came *after* the Bible. Whatever!

Well, when these new ideas about Jesus were first being proposed, the Apostle John was still alive: he was *old*—like in his 80s—but alive. And let’s just say he didn’t take kindly to these creative ideas. From his home in Ephesus in Turkey, he grabs a pen and starts firing off a feisty rebuttal to those Christians in the surrounding areas that had started to listen to people suggesting Gnostic ideas.

PP#3: *Image of the elderly Apostle John writing.*

He starts strong: I have seen this Jesus, and have touched Him. I know what I’m talking about. I was there! There is truth, and there are lies. I have always taught you the truth. And the truth is that “The blood of God’s Son Jesus washes all our sins away.” There. I’ve just summarized 1 John 1:1-7. He’s barely started his opening, and John hammers the core Gospel: we are saved by Jesus’ atoning sacrifice on the cross! It’s not some inner Gnosis that is released. It’s sin that is cleansed...your sin, and Jesus’ sacrifice washes it away! Wow, John comes out swinging!

Evidently, he thinks this is *kind of* important! And you know, it still is for us today, too, for we tend to lean a little gnostic.

PP#4: *Weight lifter lifting dumbbells labeled “1 John” on them.*

We’re in our spring message series, Strengthening the Core. After Christmas we met Jesus at the rail and gave our lives to Him. During Lent, we gave up what is ungodly in us. And now we strengthen our spiritual cores, so that we can grow in love, the love that is God. We’re reading through 1 John to get *pumped up!*

Last time—two weeks ago!—when we started this series, we saw that the main theme in this whole book is that God is committed and self-sacrificing love. We see that most clearly in Jesus. Love is something you do. Jesus is God’s self-sacrificing action that cleanses us from our sin.

So, ready to work your spiritual core? Remember, partial commitment doesn’t cut it! All warmed up? Let’s get lifting!

PP#5: 1 John 1:8-2:11 (CEV)

8 If we say that we have not sinned, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth isn’t in our hearts.
9 But if we confess our sins to God, He can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and His message isn’t in our hearts.

1 John 1, starting with verse 8, “If we say that we have not sinned, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth isn’t in our hearts. But if we confess our sins to God, He can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away. If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and His message isn’t in our hearts.”

John says that the human problem is sin. Gnostics claimed that the problem wasn’t sin, it is corruption with the physical world. Salvation was turning to the truth inside and letting it out. Jesus’ death, in this view, just helped us see that we have to give up the bodily pleasures and worldly focus, and instead make it all about knowledge.

Here’s where we lean a little gnostic. We demote sin. We don’t think it’s really that big of a deal: Rather, it’s all about knowledge. Knowledge is power. If you know better, you’ll do what is better. The problem is ignorance. You just have to know the truth.

John lunges at that one: Truth? You want truth? The truth is, the problem isn’t what you know or don’t know. The problem isn’t ignorance. It’s a corrupt human will. And that corrupt human will is trying to contort the Gospel to make it something *we do*. Gnostics claim that we don’t have a sinful will, a bent to selfishness. We have a good will that is just a little errant. We need to fix that by embracing the goodness deep inside.

PP#6: Partial Commitment Doesn't Cut It!

1. The truth is we are sinners and need cleansing

See how we lean a little gnostic? We kind of buy into this. People aren’t evil. We’re just broken. We need resources. We need understanding. We need opportunities. We don’t sin in really bad ways. We mostly do good. And sin, well, you know, we all struggle with a bit of selfishness. But we just need to focus on the positive, and keep trying, and make improvements. We need a little Jesus to help us. You know, a partial commitment, like just choosing to follow His teachings. He is our example and guide and teacher. But atoning sacrifice for our sin? Well, maybe a little.

We lean a little gnostic.

John says that when we lean this way, we are in danger of forfeiting our very salvation! When we aren't honest with ourselves, we then don't receive the total cleansing Jesus won for us. If our sinning isn't that bad, then we don't humbly confess, and then, we don't receive forgiveness.

God says we need saving, cleansing, forgiveness. And Jesus came to do it. Is God a liar? True self-awareness sets us free! A partial commitment about sin doesn't cut it. We need a total cleansing!

PP#7: 1 John 1:8-2:11 (CEV)

2:1 My children, I am writing this so that you won't sin. But if you do sin, Jesus Christ always does the right thing, and He will speak to the Father for us. 2 Christ is the sacrifice that takes away our sins and the sins of all the world's people.

How are you doing? Ready for more reps? Feeling the burn? Let's keep going! You can do it! Chapter 2! "My children, I am writing this so that you won't sin. But if you do sin, Jesus Christ always does the right thing, and He will speak to the Father for us. Christ is the sacrifice that takes away our sins and the sins of all the world's people."

Woah! Did you hear that? John just said that we are all sinners, but now, since we have Jesus, He wants us to not sin. Is that possible?

"No, it's not. Everyone sins. It's okay. Don't worry about it. Just take a partial commitment to Jesus. We don't want to actually die to ourselves, you know, put to death our selfishness. Just do your best. Try hard, and listen to the voice within. Follow your own truth."

Oops...we're leaning a little gnostic again. If Jesus did die for our sins, then yes, our past sins are forgiven. But then, too, He gives us His Holy Spirit to live in us, and give us the power not to follow our selfish desires. We can resist!

PP#8: Partial Commitment Doesn't Cut It!

1. The truth is we are sinners and need cleansing
2. The truth is that we don't have to sin

Here's the kicker: if Jesus is in us, then we have the power to not sin! If we say we can't stop sinning, we're actually choosing a partial commitment to Jesus.

"But it's just so hard to resist! I keep messing up!"

Yes, it's hard. And I may mess up. But I'm all in for Jesus, and I desire to not sin. And I know God is working in me to change me, from the inside out. My bent to sinning is getting better. If I continue to surrender—that hard work of surrender—to Jesus, the truth is, I improve! I'm not as prone to sin like I was in the past. God is working in me.

PP#9: 1 John 1:8-2:11 (CEV)

3 When we obey God, we are sure that we know Him. 4 But if we claim to know Him and don't obey Him, we are lying and the truth isn't in our hearts. 5 We truly love God only when we obey Him as we should, and then we know that we belong to Him. 6 If we say we are His, we must follow the example of Christ.

Verse 3, "When we obey God, we are sure that we know Him. But if we claim to know Him and don't obey Him, we are lying and the truth isn't in our hearts. We truly love God only when we obey Him as we should, and then we know that we belong to Him. If we say we are His, we must follow the example of Christ."

Remember, love is something you do. Love looks like obedience! It is doing what God wants you to. That means, when that person makes you react, you can, with God's help, not react badly. We can live like Jesus did. It's not easy, but we're working our core, right? It's easier to lie. Partial commitment. Gnosticism is more comfortable.

PP#10: 1 John 1:8-2:11 (CEV)

7 My dear friends, I am not writing to give you a new commandment. It is the same one that you were first given, and it is the message you heard. 8 But it really is a new commandment, and you know its true meaning, just as Christ does. You can see the darkness fading away and the true light already shining.

Verse 7, "My dear friends, I am not writing to give you a new commandment. It is the same one that you were first given, and it is the message you heard. But it really is a new commandment, and you know its true meaning, just as Christ does. You can see the darkness fading away and the true light already shining."

It's the old commandment that God gave for us to live holy, godly lives, as He is holy. But it is a new commandment, in that now it is possible because we have Jesus' cleansing sacrifice. It's pushing back the darkness, in each of us, and letting God's light shine, out of us!

The truth is that we don't have to sin! Lift that for a while. We'll keep coming back to that in the weeks ahead.

PP#11: 1 John 1:8-2:11 (CEV)

9 If we claim to be in the light and hate someone, we are still in the dark. 10 But if we love others, we are in the light, and we don't cause problems for them. 11 If we hate others, we are living and walking in the dark. We don't know where we are going, because we can't see in the dark.

How's your workout? Can you take a little more? You can do it. Don't quit now! One more!

Verse 9, "If we claim to be in the light and hate someone, we are still in the dark. But if we love others, we are in the light, and we don't cause problems for them. If we hate others, we are living and walking in the dark. We don't know where we are going, because we can't see in the dark."

How is it that we can truly not sin? The key, says John, is not just to will yourself to not sin and resist the negativity inside. For when we do that, we still focus on the sin! Instead, the Jesus follower focuses on loving. Rather than trying to stop hating that person who just irritates you, try instead to love him or her. It's choosing to love, giving love a try! And you can do that. You can chose to love: loving is something you do, so you can act out that commitment to love by how you treat that person.

PP#12: Partial Commitment Doesn't Cut It!

1. The truth is we are sinners and need cleansing
2. The truth is that we don't have to sin
3. The truth is that not sinning means loving

Step one: this week, choose to love the people you love most. You know, your spouse, your kids, your bestie. At times you get frustrated with them, argue, lash out, and get mad. But for this week, take those people you love most, and over and over again choose to love them. Choose to see

them as your ally. Tell yourself: she is not the enemy. He is not the problem. I choose to love her. I will put his self interest above my own. Now, that's heavy lifting! But you can do it!

Let's practice. Repeat after me. "He is not the enemy....She is not the problem....I choose to love him....I will put her self interest above my own." Do that for a week, over and over again. Practice! Reps! Love muscle-memory! And Jesus will help you. You can do it! Love is a choice.

PP#13: He is not the enemy!

She is not the problem!

I choose to love him!

I will put her self interest above my own!

Then, once you've done a bit of this toning, then next week, go to the next level, and pick someone you don't like! And do the same for that person. God will help you. He will give you strength, and resolve, and self-control you didn't know you had! You can love that person! And, as you increase in love, you will find yourself sinning less and less!

Partial commitment just doesn't cut it. It's easier, but it doesn't lead to growth. We tend to lean a little gnostic, because it gives us a good excuse. But John here doesn't pull any punches. He starts out hard, and blunt, and real. He wants his followers toned. He wants them strong.

PP#14: Image from: <http://efn-vn.com/guy-sitting-after-exercise-in-the-gym-2/?lang=hu>

Okay. Time for a rest. You've pushed yourself hard on this workout. Good job! Let's take a breather, and recover. Let's go bask in God's love. Let's get some Living Water! Let's proclaim the truth in Jesus. Our salvation comes not from ourselves. It comes from His sacrifice, washing away our sin. Jesus' blood shed was not just a good story that we know. It is what actually washes away our sin, and makes us able to love.

We must call sin, "sin." When we confess our sins, we receive God's forgiveness. We lean further into God's amazing grace. And we will notice, as we chose obedience in loving others, that God will bulk up His love in us. You see, just a little commitment doesn't cut it!

What can wash away our sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Take that, Gnosticism!

Let's sing!

Closing Song: *Nothing but the Blood* - Sanctify

PP: Memory Verse

"But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we've done wrong." -1 John 1:9

Announcements:

Sign up for Small Groups.

Lifeline tonight.

Benediction: -Pastor David