

SUNDAY, MAY 6: *WORSHIP OUTLINE*

Opening Song: *Resurrecting* -Sanctify

Welcome: -Pastor David

Good morning!

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

Today we are having Holy Communion.

It's open to anyone who wishes to receive. We want you to know Jesus invites you to come!

PP: Memory Verse:

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us in that we should be called God's children, and that is what we are!" -1 John 3:1

Memory Verse:

Let's try it together...

Worship Music Set: - Sanctify

Lead On, O King Eternal

White Flag

No Longer Slaves

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Video: **Training with Bobby Buff** (Andrew & Matt)

Kid's Moment (Andrew)

Message: Core Strength 4: "Pure Kids"

Bumper Video

PP#1: Core Strength: Pure Kids

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us in that we should be called God's children, and that is what we are!" -1 John 3:1

Core Strength: "Pure Kids." 1 John 3:1 "See what kind of love the Father has given to us in that we should be called God's children, and that is what we are!"

We're building our core spiritual strength during this spring series, and we're doing that by following the workout regimen of 1 John. We started out with an honest desire and commitment to work toward being the person God wants us to be. This is our life's goal.

And, it started off all right. God is love. Yeah, good stuff! Love is not a feeling, but an action. God is pushing us to tackle our sin, give it up, and seek holiness. We are anointed by God, specially chosen for an important work. Yeah, we can do this!

PP#2: *Image of person really struggling with a workout.*

But now, we've come to the point in our workout plan, where the initial excitement has worn off. Our early energy and commitment begin to lag. We start hitting walls. We struggle. It's no longer really fun. It's hard work.

We're now half way through 1 John. The early discoveries of God's love, and our special identity in Christ, our different futures, and the gift of the Holy Spirit within us, have been thrilling. But together, these begin to point to an expectation that begins to get sink in.

PP#3: Sinlessness in 1 John

- 1:8 If we claim, "We don't have any sin," we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
- 2:1 My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you don't sin. But if you do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one.
- 2:4 The one who claims, "I know him," while not keeping his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in this person.
- 2:5 But the love of God is truly perfected in whoever keeps His word.
- 2:6 The one who claims to remain in him ought to live in the same way as he lived.

1 John 1:8, "If we claim, "We don't have any sin,' we deceive ourselves." Right. This we understand. Without Jesus, we sin. But then, after getting warmed up, John says something shocking in chapter 2, "I'm writing this to you so that you don't sin." What does that mean? Is John serious? Verse 4, "If you claim to follow Jesus, and not keep His commandments, the truth isn't in you." We get worried. God is love, and did you know, says John in verse 5, that God perfects His love in His people. And if we claim to follow Jesus, and remain in Him, we live the same way He did.

PP#4: Outline of 1 John:

- Introduction. 1 John 1:1-4
- God is Light/Truth (and what this means for us!) 1 John 1:5 - 3:10
- God is Love (and what this means for us!) 1 John 3:11 - 5:12
- Conclusion: 1 John 5:13-21

You see, John starts off his sermon, the first half of this book, talking about God as Light and Truth. We need to put away our darkness, our false teachings, what we want and wish God to be, and instead agree to take God at His word. John starts by describing God as Light and Truth because John knows His readers, need a paradigm shift, to switch how we understand things...especially ourselves. And that switch has to do with sin.

Listen, he says, follow the truth. And the truth is that God wants you to put away sin, and live in love. The problem is that honestly, we compromise on this. We don't put away sin. We say we *want* to put away sin, we say that *eventually* God will take all that away (like when we die), but for now, we just *try* to put sin away. We do our best, but God knows we really can't do that 100%.

John says that we make that our excuse. We tell ourselves we really can't, and then we don't really even try that hard to beat it. We learn to live with our sin, perhaps making some progress here and there, but we don't believe we can go sinless.

John says that we are basing this thinking on what is *easy*, rather than what is *true*. That's why God is Light and Truth. And this frames everything very differently.

Turn to 1 John 3. It begins with our amazing memory verse for today. It's an amazing truth we must embrace. But it's a truth that sets us on course to sinlessness.

PP#5: 1 John 3:1-15 (CEB)

1 John 3:1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us in that we should be called God's children, and that is what we are! Because the world didn't recognize Him, it doesn't recognize us.

2 Dear friends, now we are God's children, and it hasn't yet appeared what we will be. We know that when He appears we will be like Him because we'll see Him as He is.

Verse 1, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us in that we should be called God's children, and that is what we are!" Don't ever let go of that amazing truth. This is your identity! This is who you are! You are a child of God! Remind yourself of that daily! "Because the world didn't recognize Him, it doesn't recognize us." Being God's children doesn't make life easier. Life won't treat you better. The world doesn't seem to take kindly to God's way of things. Jesus didn't get a good reception. You probably won't either. But that's okay...because like Jesus, you now are God's child, too, adopted! Verse 2, "Dear friends, now we are God's children, and it hasn't yet appeared what we will be." Our final selves won't happen until when Jesus returns. "We know that when He appears we will be like Him because we'll see Him as He is." We, like Jesus, will be raised again and live eternally with new bodies.

PP#6: 1 John 3:1-15 (CEB)

3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself even as He is pure. 4 Every person who practices sin commits an act of rebellion, and sin is rebellion. 5 You know that He appeared to take away sins, and there is no sin in Him. 6 Every person who remains in relationship to Him does not sin. Any person who sins has not seen Him or known Him.

So, your new reality is that you are God's child. And that truth changes everything! Hang on, here we go! Verse 3, "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies him/herself even as He is pure." As God's child, we have a new future. And as we prepare for it, we do it by putting away sin, purifying ourselves, just as Jesus is pure. We are God's pure kids! Verse 4, "Every person who practices sin commits an act of rebellion, and sin is rebellion."

Pause here a minute. As we begin to hit the wall of being sinless, let's see it not with our understanding, but God's. We think of sinlessness as being perfect, like without flaw. That means never even being tempted, never wanting anything ungodly. That means never making a mistake. But notice, that's not what John is saying sin is. Sin is an act of *rebellion* against God. That's a different understanding of sin. Rebellion is a willful act.

PP#7: "Sin" defined by *the Johns* (John Wesley and John the Apostle):

Sin is a willful disobedience to a known ordinance [rule/expectation] of God.

In fact, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, who constantly taught the reality of sinlessness among the Methodists, was careful to separate our modern understanding of sin, and the way John talks about sin here in 1 John. Wesley defines sin as "a willful disobedience to a known ordinance of God."

So, sin is not all that imperfection and mistakes we today think about. It's knowing better and doing it, or not doing it. Sin has a component of stubborn, self-will defiance. Hang on to that.

PP#8: 1 John 3:1-15 (CEB)

3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself even as He is pure. 4 Every person who practices sin commits an act of rebellion, and sin is rebellion. 5 You know that He appeared to take away sins, and there is no sin in Him. 6 Every person who remains in relationship to Him does not sin. Any person who sins has not seen Him or known Him.

Verse 5, “You know that He appeared to take away sins, [Jesus came to break our human stubborn selfishness. He breaks our self-will and gives us a will that can do right.] and there is no sin in Him [for He took our sins away on the cross]. Every person who remains in relationship to Him does not sin. Any person who sins has not seen Him or known Him.”

It doesn't get any more blunt than that. The *truth* is, we need to throw out our idea that we can't be sinless. We need to develop this core strength!

John is not saying that Jesus followers WON'T sin. After all, in 2:1 John said, I'm writing this so you don't sin, but if you do, Jesus offers forgiveness. You see, it's not that we won't have singular acts of sin. John is talking about that defiant will of ours. If we are God's children, forgiven and saved by Jesus, and we commit to now follow, then our selfish spirits are broken in us, and we have the Holy Spirit in us to help us to continue to surrender ourselves to Jesus. If we have Jesus, then He will work on us to break that defiance, that rebellion within us, and give us a desire to live instead for Him. So, if we *remain* in Jesus, His Spirit will break our defiant sin. If we continue to refuse to yield our selfish plans, then we really haven't made Him our Lord. Yes we continue to struggle...Paul famously said that our defiant inner selves continue within us. But with the help of Jesus, we can refuse to act on them. We can! Why? Because we are God's children. If you don't think that we can stop this kind of sinning, then you're not believing in the God who can stop it in you. All right, you still with me? It doesn't have to be easy. Just let it steep in you. Be open to it.

PP#9: 1 John 3:1-15 (CEB)

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you. The person who practices righteousness is righteous, in the same way that Jesus is righteous. 8 The person who practices sin belongs to the devil, because the devil has been sinning since the beginning. God's Son appeared for this purpose: to destroy the works of the devil. 9 Those born from God don't practice sin because God's DNA remains in them. They can't sin because they are born from God. 10 This is how God's children and the devil's children are apparent: everyone who doesn't practice righteousness is not from God, including the person who doesn't love a brother or sister.

Verse 7, “Little children, make sure no one deceives you. [Stop believing the world that says you must sin.] The person who practices righteousness is righteous, in the same way that Jesus is righteous. [You are made righteous, so you can do what is right.] The person who practices sin belongs to the devil, because the devil has been sinning since the beginning [the beginning here doesn't mean creation, but since the beginning of humanity. Satan and the demons fell into sin before Adam breathed.] God's Son appeared for this purpose: to destroy the works of the devil. Those born from God don't practice sin because God's DNA remains in them. [We are made God's children, and His image, created in us, is restored so that we live by God's image in us.] They can't sin because they are born from God. [Hang on to that for a second.] This is how God's children and the devil's children are apparent: everyone who doesn't practice righteousness is not from God, including the person who doesn't love a brother or sister.”

Okay: those who are born of God, meaning Christians, can't sin. The English here gets us into trouble. John is writing in Greek, and his exact words are not "cannot commit a sin," as we think of not being able to. Remember, earlier John said that when we do sin, we can seek forgiveness. Technically, in the Greek, it says, "He who is born of God "cannot be a sinner."

This distinction is really important for our modern ears. It's not that Christians are no longer able to commit an act of sin. It's that Christians cannot remain defiantly rebellious against God. As Albert Barnes says in his notes, Christians cannot commit sins *habitually*. The reason is that the Holy Spirit points it out in us, works on us about it, and calls us to give it up. We can't pursue Jesus and let this blatant rebellion continue. If we do, then we haven't really made Jesus our Lord.

The key here comes in the next verses, when John points to Cain's murder of Able, and tells us not to be calloused and defiant like Cain was when God called out his sin to him.

But before we continue, I want to just draw your attention to the crossing of the great divide in John. Although John continues his teaching on sinlessness, it is in verse 3:11 that John switches from his major image that God is Light, to pointing out that God is Love. It's marked by this second use of the phrase, "This is the message that you heard from the beginning."

PP#10: 1 John 3:1-15 (CEB)

11 This is the message that you heard from the beginning: love each other. 12 Don't behave like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he kill him? He killed him because his own works were evil, but the works of his brother were righteous.

13 Don't be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have transferred from death to life, because we love the brothers and sisters. The person who does not love remains in death. 15 Everyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

Here we go, verse 11, "This is the message that you heard from the beginning: love each other. [John's going to work with this theme for the next two chapters...God is love, God loves us, we love God, and we love each other. Here, John's saying that if we are God's children, we live that out by loving each other.] Don't behave like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he kill him? He killed him because his own works were evil [defiant and rebellious before God], but the works of his brother were righteous. Don't be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. [Right? You won't necessarily be popular. All the more opportunity to return love for hate!] We know that we have transferred from death to life [we are God's children], because we love the brothers and sisters. The person who does not love remains in death. Everyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him." Look at your neighbor...if you hate them, you're in trouble. You have placed that hate above your love for Jesus, and that'll derail God's future plans for you. See, we are now wading into living lives of godly love, that John will talk about for the rest of his sermon. Come back next week for *the love*, baby! Cool!

PP#11: *Image showing "sin" and "love" as opposites, perhaps a continuum, pendulum, "vs.," etc.*

But I think John brings up love on purpose here, as he's talking about going sinless. It's because love is really what sinless means. If sin is defiant rebellion, then love is the opposite, the antidote. And here is the hope that John shares with us Jesus followers, as we wrestle with the calling to be sinless.

So, let's put down the heavy weights we've been lifting here, the weights of sinlessness. And in stead, let's take up the love workout.

And I mean that not just as the cute gimmick of weight room to help understand 1 John. I mean it as a spiritual breakthrough for our daily living. J.D. Walt says this in the book we're reading together. He says that for John, what if we stop trying to tackle sin, and worry and struggle with that, and instead, push into the antidote, the opposite.

Here's our key takeaway today: Let's *stop* trying to stop sinning, and in stead *start* trying to start loving! It changes everything! Besides, it connects with our core identity as God's children.

PP#12: *Image for "choose to love" or "I chose to love" or something like that.*

Because we are God's children, and we have the Holy Spirit in us, we can love more, and better, and stronger. We can grow in our love, of God, and others. We can grow in our love of God by spending effort on those practices that make us close to Him. That's worship, and small groups, and prayer, and Christian music, and reading God-stuff, and pausing. We can grow in our love for others, as we pray for those who irritate us, choose to think about others as valuable, and letting our feelings cool off before we respond, by writing only positive posts about others and the world, by choosing to believe the best about others, as labeling them an ally rather than enemy, by making a war room prayer room we go to, to pray for the struggles in our world. We can actively do these things.

And each time we choose to love, we eliminate the potential to sin. We can do that. I've done that. You've all done that. You've got it right before. You've responded well to the verbal darts thrown at you. You've returned grace for meanness. You've had the Holy Spirit turn you around and do a good deed.

Let's focus on doing more of that. Let's focus on loving more, and better, and longer. When we do, we will notice that we do sin less! Sinlessness, after all, is a by-product loving. When we pursue love, the consequence is that we eliminate sin. So, let's stop debating sinlessness. It just causes a lot of angst, anyway. Instead, let's unite in pursuing loving. After all, sinlessness is not actually our goal. Loving is our goal. Sinlessness is the result.

There are times you love. There are times you are sinless. It is possible! As we work our core, let's not commit to sinlessness. Let's commit to loving longer. Let's increase our times of love, our periods of loving, our situations in which we love first. Let's extend those. And as we do, we will diminish acting in sin. It will occur naturally. Sin and darkness will slowly fade from our hearts, and Light and Truth and Love will glow more brightly. And one day, it is possible, our hearts will be so full of love, there will be no darkness or sin there. But then, when that happens, I doubt we'll notice it or care. We will be too preoccupied with loving.

We are God's children, and that means we love!

Amen.

Prayers (David)

We're going to act out the love that God showed to us in Jesus, when we celebrate Holy Communion. So, to get ready, I want to invite you to spend a moment asking the Holy Spirit to work love into your hearts. Ask Him to help you love more, better, deeper, longer. Ask Him to identify areas or people you need to be intentional about loving. Ask Him to remind you, day by day, to ask for His help to love better. Take a moment, open your hearts to Him. And then we will say a prayer together.

[Pause.]
Let us pray....

PP#14: Prayer:

Whatever it takes, Lord, increase my capacity to love until I love you with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love my neighbor as I love myself. Amen.

Holy Communion

Introduction (Dan Hair)

Words of Institution (Dan Hair)

Holy Spirit Prayer of blessing over the elements (Dan Hair)

Presentation of the elements (David)

Invitacion Fountain, during Offering and Receiving the Elements (Sanctify)

Closing Song: *We Are the Free* - Sanctify

PP: Memory Verse

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us in that we should be called God’s children, and that is what we are!” -1 John 3:1

Announcements:

Benediction: -Pastor David