

Real Christ-follower: Close the Gap

1 John 2:1-6

MPS Real Christ-followers live by faith in the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to walk as he walked.

OBJ Every person can understand the life of a real Christ-follower closing the gap by trusting Jesus in His three roles.

READ 1 John 2:1-6

*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. ²He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. ³And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. **1 John 2:1-6***

Q? **What does a pastor share on the 20th anniversary of the church?** Many things seem appropriate, some preferable. There are definite points to celebrate and plenty of cause for rejoicing, and of course, mission and vision that defines who we are. The most comprehensive statement I can make is to simply say, "Thank you!"

- Thank you to every person who resonated with the vision to "gather & go" when there was no church. And, for every person who, through the years, has embraced the vision to join the mission, and especially those of you who have so deeply aligned with LifePoint to embody the vision. As of today, LifePoint has baptized more than 400 people and celebrates 280 Covenant Members and a weekly ministry of over 600 people.
- Thank you to every person who was moved to "give" when there was no church. And, to every person who has remained committed through the years not only to see LifePoint survive, but to thrive as a generous church. Over 20 years LifePoint has stewarded \$18M in general resources, which means we have given ~\$2M for gospel Impact. And above and beyond all general ministry and Impact giving, we have paid over \$5M in capital investments for a current \$7,5M+ value of ministry space that is all nearing the "debt-free" mark.

But of greatest and highest thanks we say to the Lord Jesus, "Thank you, Lord, for you are the One who has led us, enabled us, done for us, and proved faithful time and time again. All the glory is yours! All glory and praise be to your Name alone!"

TRANS **How do you cover all of these?** The next passage in our First John study provides an excellent opportunity.

John begins with a term of deep affection, "My little children". What better way to remind us of our first core value as a church, Relationship. John uses these titles of familial affection throughout his letter to express his love and to endear his message to his hearers. But his appeal is much greater, flowing from a deep bond we share as a member of the family of God. **These titles remind us that the foundation for all of John's writing is the unending, abounding, overflowing love of God in Jesus Christ.**

Q? **Is your life anchored in God's love? Do you believe so that you live on the bedrock foundation of God's love for you?**

When you live on the foundation of God's love, nothing God will say to you will be greater than His worthiness for you to trust and obey. But when you do not, all He says becomes subject to your suspicions and surmising, and very little will ever seem worthy of your obedience. Every time you read a title of affection in this letter, remind yourself of this; **the love of God in Jesus Christ is unending, abounding, and overflowing so that you need never to question Him, only to trust and obey.**

On the introduction, John writes: "*I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.*" Read that again; "*I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.*" I wonder how many times people have read this statement and continued on with no consideration of John's words. Let me ask this another way. **How do you envision your whole life as a Christian?**

ILLUS In 2003 when I began envisioning a new church plant, I didn't start by asking, "**what does a church look like?**" I began with two questions, "**What is a disciple, and what does it mean to make disciples?**" The answer to these two questions is what LifePoint now calls a real Christ-follower; hence our mission, "leading people to be real Christ-followers in life together." We define real Christ-follower by four areas; a Worshiper who engages the heart to grow an all-consuming love



for God; a Servant who engages their hands to serve and show the love of God to others; a Disciple who engages the mind to learn and apply the gospel to all of life; and a Missioner who engages their feet to live to share God's love by the gospel with others. [The gospel that IS God's power FOR life engages our whole life to walk by faith in Jesus.](#)

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Look against at John's statement. He provides not only a vision for the life of every Christ-follower, but also the power that enables that vision to become reality! John states, "*I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.*", but then immediately says, "*But if anyone does sin.*". John does not preach an expectation of perfection. Our aim, the vision of our life, is one of obedience unto Jesus. In the midst of a Christ-follower's "Aim" the reality of sin remains! [The expectation of a real Christ-follower is for transformation from God as we trust to abide in Jesus to keep His commands.](#)

TRANS [So how, then, does a real Christ-follower live?](#) We live only by abiding in Jesus Christ the righteous!

OBJ [Jesus' Three Roles for a Christ-follower to ABIDE and walk as He walked.](#)

1. **Advocate.**

Immediately after stating the reality of sin that remains, John states that we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. John reminds us that Jesus is righteous, wholly worthy of the Name and position that He has been given. Philippians 2:9-11 declares that it was the Father who raised and exalted Jesus to the highest place with a Name above every other name. And Hebrews 7:25 declares; "*he always lives to make intercession for them.*" [From the highest seat in Heaven, Jesus is advocating for you with the Father.](#)

Q? [Why does Jesus advocate for us when we "aim to not sin, but when we do"? Can there be any better representative for us?](#)

ILLUS One can often tell if an accused person was guilty by the Attorney that they hired. For many years there was a famous, infamous, attorney in the Springfield area that when an accused criminal showed up in the evening news with this attorney, the first thing everyone said was, "You know they're guilty. That's why they hired him." Not Guilty people can't afford to get a cheap attorney. Guilty people want the best representation no matter the cost! [The only people who put Jesus on retainer are the guilty because He is not only the best representation with God, but He is the ONLY Advocate with the Father!](#)

[A real Christ-follower holds as their aim to not sin, but recognizes it remains, so they run to Jesus who advocates for them to the Father for them.](#)

TRANS [But why is Jesus the only way? Are there no other advocates with the Father?](#) John tells why Jesus is the only way.

2. **Propitiation and righteousness. .2-3**

Jesus is the righteous One who is our advocate because He is the propitiation for our sins. Propitiation means that Jesus is the only One who died in our place to pay our debt. And John expands this to say "*for the sins of the whole world.*" [Does this not mean the whole world will be saved?](#) John is not teaching universal redemption, as some wrongly claim, but 'universal invitation'. All who put their faith in Jesus get their name put on Jesus' "tab" with God.

In paying our sin debt, He does far more.(.3) Jesus not only removes our guilt and condemnation, but He bestows His righteousness on all whom He forgives and cleanses. THIS, and THIS ALONE is the reason one is justified with God. Righteousness is never something we achieve but ONLY that which we receive as it is credited to us because of Jesus. John tells us how we know we have received His righteousness, when we keep His commandments. [The righteousness of Jesus is manifested in the life of a Christ-follower when by faith we confess Him AND trust to obey His commands.](#)

[A real Christ-follower is one who has placed their faith in Jesus to be forgiven of sin and receive His righteousness that we](#)



might obey His commands.

TRANS Is this what you mean when you say, “I am a Christian”? John goes on to help us know how we live out our righteousness in Jesus Christ.

3. **Commander and power.** .4-6

The One who makes us right with God and advocates for us is the One who walks WITH us. John emphasizes the importance of our “claim” being aligned with that which we “keep” in how we live. The first type he identifies is the one who makes the claim to “know” Jesus but does not “obey” His commands. And of this person he says, you are a liar and God’s truth is not in you. The second type of person is the one who makes the same claim as the first, but here “keeps” God’s Word. And he states of this person that the love of God is perfected in Him.

I want you to see that John is NOT claiming that this second person performs perfectly. Rather, motivated by God’s love in Jesus Christ, they look to Jesus, who is their advocate, propitiation, and righteousness, to trust completely. Jesus is the One who fills their heart with God’s love to walk in obedience to His commands. When a person trusts completely to obey, John states that God’s love is perfected in them! The more and longer you live by faith to trust in Jesus and obey, the greater the change of heart you will have that motivates the change of your behavior. This is transformation from God, friend, when His love is perfected in you to transform your whole being into His likeness. The way transformation works is not by “greater exertion of the will”, but greater filling as we abide in Jesus. Abide means we remember that He is FOR us as our advocate, that He is FOR us in our place of death to pay our sin debt, and that He is FOR us to empower us to walk as He commands! THIS is the GOSPEL, the power of God unto salvation for all who believe!

A real Christ-follower is one who trusts to obey Jesus’ commands so that God’s love fills their whole being to be transformed!

When LifePoint says, “leading people to be real Christ-followers in life together”, this is what we mean. Jesus is our advocate, our propitiation and righteousness, and in Him we aim to abide that we might walk in obedience to His commands by His power!

Real Christ-followers live by faith in Jesus Christ to walk as he walked.

Is your claim to know Jesus aligned with your keeping His commands? Are you abiding in Him to be transformed by God’s love?

