

"Warnings"
1 John 2:7-29
Ellen Wong

Have you ever watched a movie twice and the second time you watched it, there are scenes that you don't remember seeing? Or have you given advice to someone and (s)he didn't take your advice? But when someone else tells them the exact same thing, they act as if they are hearing it for the first time and think it's a brilliant idea. This is particularly common in children. For some reason, advice comes across better from somebody other than the parents. (How many of you have experienced this? Don't you feel like chopped liver? Speaking of chopped liver, do you know where that expression came from? It stems from a traditional Jewish side dish often perceived as less important than other dishes, hence the phrase representing the feeling of being overlooked or ignored.) My point is that sometimes we need to see or hear things more than once. We may see new things in an old movie, or we may hear old information as if it's new.

John had said in verse 7, "I am not writing you a new command but an old one." And then in the very next verse (8), he turns around and said, "Yet I am writing you a new command...". This is like an oxymoron. This is like something I tell my students on the first day of class. I tell them, "My goal is to make you feel more comfortable, and in order to make you feel more comfortable, I have to make you feel uncomfortable first." You may wonder, what I do to make them feel uncomfortable? It's to talk to strangers and everyone is a stranger on the first day of class.

Back to verse 8: "Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining." Let's break up the verse in several parts.

- **"New Command"**: The commandment to love is an old principle from the Old Testament.

Leviticus 19:18 "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself."

John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." The command is presented as new in the context of Christ's arrival and the transformation He brings to believers.

When my kids would fight, they would often say, "I hate you!" I would have to remind them that they don't necessarily hate their siblings but hate their actions. We are called to love each other unconditionally. God loves us unconditionally even though we continue to sin. He loves the sinner, but not the sin. We, too, should love each other, but we don't have to approve or accept their behaviors. Are there people in your

life that you love but disapprove of their behaviors? It's usually the people closest to you.

- **"True in Him":**

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." God loved us that much to have Jesus Christ sacrifice His life to save us.

"We were made not primarily that we may love God (though we were made for that too) but that God may love us, that we may become objects in which the Divine love may rest "well pleased." – C. S. Lewis

- **"and in You":**

This means that those who follow Christ are called to live out this same love, to reflect God's truth in our actions and relationships. We love Him because He first loved us. **(1 John 4:19)**

- **"Darkness is Passing Away":**

The "darkness" refers to the realm of sin and unbelief, which fades as the light of Christ shines. And the last portion of verse 8 says...

- **"The True Light is Already Shining":**

The true light is Jesus, and His light is shining in the hearts of believers, empowering us to love as He loved. Have you seen people who are currently in a dark place? Think about this. What kind of pain has someone gone through to have so much hate? There's spiritual warfare here. Some don't know God and are plagued with Satan's love for hatred (love for hate, there's another oxymoron).

Colossians 4:5 (NLT) says, "Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity." You may be placed as God's light to shine against that darkness.

Matthew 5: 14-16 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."

Ephesians 5:16 "Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days." We are ambassadors for Christ. Christians are called to live lives that reflect the message of reconciliation, demonstrating the love and grace of God to others.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (NKJV), "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." Your life, our lives should reflect love, peace, and harmony. It is through our example of how we live/how we behave that can have everlasting effects on others.

2 Timothy 2:24 (NLT) A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people.

2 Timothy 2:26 (NLT) Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.

Angry, deceitful people are victims themselves, under Satan's plan. We (as believers in Jesus Christ) have a duty, an obligation, and a calling to be a light. "Light makes dark brighter. The darker it is, the lighter it can be." (Pastor John Reeve) Ultimately, verse 8 encourage believers to live out their faith through love, reflecting the light of Christ in their lives and actions.

There isn't anyone who hasn't dealt with conflict at some point in their lives. How do you deal with conflict? It is so easy to attack when you are being attacked. It is easy to hate when you are being hated.

Here are 10 strategies that can be used to manage conflict:

1. Listen (**James 1:19** ...be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry) and acknowledge other's point of view. Seek first to understand, then to be understood. (John Maxwell)
2. Use "I" instead of "You"
3. Focus on the tone of voice
4. Acknowledge other's feelings
5. Watch body language
6. Accept valid criticism
7. Focus on the problem at hand – not past issues
8. Take a team approach – compromise
9. Agree to Disagree
10. Time out

Diffusing conflict is always better than repairing damaged relations. (Damaged relations look like a broken mug that was glued back together. It will never be the same again.) Although, no matter what you do, there are some people who thrive on conflict.

Let's play a little game. Our culture loves to use acronyms. You tell me what these abbreviations mean.

LOL – OMG - EGR (Extra Grace Required).

Some people are hard to love. They don't LOL. Everything is OMG. The next time you encounter a difficult person, remember, they may just need a little EGR, Extra Grace Required.

In verses 9 – 11, John used the imagery of light and darkness to represent truth and falsehood, righteousness and sin, and fellowship with God and separation from Him. Hating others is presented as a sign of spiritual darkness. The passage encourages believers to live in obedience to God's commandments, which is to love one another and walk in the light. He states that love for fellow believers is an indication of our faith and spiritual health.

John addressed spiritual health through the stages of spiritual maturity in verses 12-14. He writes to the fathers, young men, and children. The “father” is referred to the most mature, having a deep knowledge of God and knowing Him to His fullness. “Young men” have yet to experience the full maturity of knowing God in the Word and through life, but have a strong hold of doctrine. They have been victorious in battles with the enemy and with every battle won, the young men grow in their relationship with God. The reference to “children” is for those who have the basic awareness of God but still need to grow. As children learn more about God, they grow in their ability to win battles against temptations.

All are in God’s family and manifest Christ’s character, but at different spiritual levels. If I may, let me use a personal experience to explain the levels.

I tend to get a little anxious about writing these lectures. If you recall what I said in the last lecture I gave (Well, I don’t expect you to remember what I said 5 months ago, since I can’t remember what I had for breakfast). I had the weirdest experience. Weird is not the correct term, wonderful experience of not being stressed over writing a lecture. Well, this lecture was a little different. I was just short of panic. No, that’s not true. But I was starting to feel a little nervous.

Weeks before the lecture, I must confess, I skipped a couple of opportunities to get prayer. I kept telling myself. “I got this. I did fine the last time.” But, as each day went by, my computer screen remained blank. So, I swallowed my pride and allowed myself to receive prayer. Shortly after, I had several people ask about my next POW lecture and added some positive feedback. **Hebrews 3:13** says “But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” Boy, if that wasn’t God talking to me. He was reassuring me. “I’ve got your back.”

There should be no fear because God will supply every need of ours (**Philippians 4:19**). Had I been in that place of complete peace, that would be John addressing the “fathers.”

I was able to recognize that Satan was at work and resisted the temptation to walk down that path of anxiety, which ultimately would have led me into his playground. And if I were drawn into that playground, I would have been classified as one of the “children”, a believer swinging in the mode of anxiety. But I refused to play. Days later (amazingly), thoughts for the lecture started flooding my mind. And as the words flowed through my fingertips, I was overwhelmed with the spirit of peace, love, and joy that could only come from the Lord.

2 Corinthians 9:8: “And God is able to shower all kinds of blessings on you, so that you will always have everything you need and have an abundance for every good work.”

Romans 15:13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Through that experience, I'd classify my spiritual walk as being one of the "young men." I was lacking full confidence but recognized that the enemy was at work. This was a battle won, and it added another notch on my spiritual belt of truth in God's armor.

Where are you in your spiritual walk with God? Has your Christian growth reached the maturity level appropriate to your stage in life? (I'm not referring to your biological age.)

Do Not Love the World:

Have you ever tried reading a menu in a dark restaurant? It's hard to make out the words. But if you sit there long enough, your eyes will adjust and then it gets easier to see. We live in this fallen world and when we are in it long enough, we too may adjust to the ways of this world. Worldly actions don't have to be the obvious steal, kill, and destroy mentality. It could be subtle day to day behaviors and desires of things we shouldn't be doing.

Some familiar thoughts may sound like this, "They deserved it. It's just a little white lie. I'm in a hurry. They won't know I have more than 15 items." There are two voices we may hear. One gentle voice saying, "don't do it" and the other yelling, "Just Do It!" I wonder who that is? It ain't Nike.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (**1 Peter 5:8**) For every sin, we open that door for evilness to seep in and then it gets easier and easier to sin. Picture this: for every wrong we do; the enemy celebrates and add another mark to his tally. But "resist the devil and he will flee from you." (**James 4:7**)

Verse 16, Worldliness can be characterized by three attitudes: "the cravings of sinful man" (preoccupied with physical desires), "the lust of the eyes" (craving and accumulation of materialism), "and the boasting of what he has and does" (obsess with status or importance). When the serpent tempted Eve (**Genesis 3:6**), he tempted her in these areas. Also, when the devil tempted Jesus in the desert, these were his three areas of attack. (**Matthew 4:1-11**)

The world encourages people to do their own thing, to be selfish, and to act on their emotions. You may have heard the phrase, "you do you and I'll do me." "You do you" is a phrase that encourages people to be themselves and do whatever they want. "I'll do me" could refer to doing something for yourself. And have you heard of YOLO? It's an acronym that stands for "you only live once" and is often used when doing something risky or spontaneous. All this is self-serving. God values self-control, a spirit of generosity, and a commitment to humble service.

Knowing that this evil world and our desires for its pleasures will end can give us courage to control our greedy, self-indulgent behavior and to continue doing God's will.

"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." (**v. 17**)

How do we resist the love of the world and continue doing God's will? It goes back to our command to love others. How would we do that? We use our gifts.

Romans 12:6 states in NKJV, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them." Our gifts come in three forms: time, talent, and treasures.

Time: Schedule a visit or grab a coffee with someone

Talent: Use your skills to help serve

Treasures: Help someone financially if you've been blessed with finances

James 4:17 reminds us, "If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them." That leads us into the subject of antichrists.

Warning Against Antichrists:

- **The Last Hour and the Antichrists (1 John 1:18)**

John begins by saying, "This is the last hour" and mentions that "many antichrists have come." The "last hour" refers to the period between the First and Second Comings of Christ which we are living in. He mentions "the antichrist" who will arise just before the world ends (**Revelation 13**) and uses the plural, "many antichrist", to identify false teachers and deceivers (aka) also known as ferocious wolves dressed in sheep's clothing (**Mathew 7:15**) who are already here.

- **False Teachers and Their Departure (1 John 2:19)**

The departure of members from the church revealed they never belonged in the first place. Some commentaries insinuate the antichrist intentionally pretended to be Christian and lured weak believers away from Christ. Others suggest people may have attended church for the wrong reasons such as attendance was a family tradition, or they enjoyed the social interaction and business opportunities; or maybe it was a long-standing habit. For these reasons, I personally think for them to be in the house of God, even if their hearts weren't in it for the right reasons, might do them some good.

- **The Anointing from the Holy One (1 John 2:20-21)**

Anointing usually refers to the pouring out of special olive oil. Oil was used to consecrate kings and special servants for service. In **1 Samuel 16:13a** it says, "So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David." It was also used by the church when someone was sick. **James 5:14** says, "Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord."

Quite a few years ago, this craze of essential oils appeared. People were claiming it could improve mood/relaxation to healing ailments. I was skeptical. What is this, hocus pocus? I have a student who had her spine fused together, and she hasn't used

any prescribed pain-killers to help deal with her pain, post-op and thereafter. Guess what she uses instead? You guessed it, essential oils. The power of oil represents the powerful anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor John MacArthur said two characteristics mark genuine Christians in contrast to the antichrists.

1. The Holy Spirit ("an anointing") guards Christians from error, and gives us the ability to see truth from fallacy.
2. The Holy Spirit guides the believer into knowing "all things." (**John 14:26**) True Christians have a built-in lie detector to persevere in truth. When we are led by the Spirit, we can stand against false teachers and the antichrist.

- **Who Is the Liar? (1 John 2:22-23)**

It's anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ. To deny Jesus is to deny both the Father and the Son. The antichrist spirit denies Jesus' true identity and mission, and John warns believers not to be deceived by these lies. The spirit of antichrist can be seen all around us today, even in our own backyard. Cults have a stronghold on many.

- **Remaining in the Truth (1 John 2:24-25)**

Here, John encouraged believers to hold on to the Christian truth they heard at the beginning of their walk with Christ. It's important to grow in our knowledge of the Lord, to deepen our understanding through careful study, and to teach these truths to others so we can be better and stronger believers.

I'm all about change to make things better. I love how quickly we can heat food in a microwave; how we can backspace errors on a computer instead of using whiteout on a typewriter. And I love how we can do research in the comfort of our homes and ditch driving to the library. But no matter how much we learn and change, and how much our world around us changes, we must never abandon the basic truths about Christ. Jesus will always be God's Son, and His sacrifice for our sins gives us forgiveness and eternal life.

- **The Holy Spirit's Teaching (1 John 2:26-27)**

I know you have all experienced this. You know when someone is telling you something and you don't quite believe them. For women, it's their intuition. For men, it's a gut feeling because everything has to do with food with men. What is that saying? "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach."

A characteristic of antichrist is that they try to deceive the faithful. John reassured believers that the anointing (the Holy Spirit) they received will continue to teach them and help them recognize the truth. John does not, however, deny the importance of gifted teachers in the church.

Ephesians 4:11-12 "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

So, John is not denying their importance but indicates that neither those teachers nor those believers are dependent on human wisdom or the opinions of men for the truth. God's Holy Spirit (our anointing) guards and guides the true believer into the truth. **(vs. 20-21)**

In this lesson, John has emphasized the importance of abiding in Christ; warned against false teachers and worldly love; and encouraged believers to live a life of righteousness, emphasizing that those who do what is right are born of God and will have confidence in His coming.

Please stand as we sing our song, and I'll close in prayer:

Closing Prayer: Father God. We live in a broken world, and in this broken world are broken people. The spirit of antichrist is among us. Help us to fully receive Your Love. Saturate our hearts so that we may pour Your Love onto others. Show us where we can use our gifts. Let us be Your Light in the mist of darkness. Keep us strong in your Word so that we will not be deceived, but to be able to discern truth from fallacy. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.