

# Living in the Light

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[ 0 : 00 ] Subscriptions for the Record magazine for 2019 are due. Please put payment of £24 in an envelope marked with Record with your name and place it in the offering.

If you don't currently receive this magazine, which I really would recommend to people, there's a lot of great stuff in it, then would like to do so. Please see Callum McKinnon.

John Lackey MacLeod of Children for Christ is looking to take a work party of men and women to Romania, most likely in the first week of May.

The approximate cost will be £500 per person, including flights and accommodation. If you'd be interested, please speak to Peggy MacLeod. The Ireland Study Conference will be held this year on the weekend of Friday the 8th to Sunday the 10th of February.

And lastly, the Mission Board want to encourage the whole Church to read through the New Testament together in the coming year. And you'll see on the sheets and probably up on the screen the chapters from Mark's Gospel for this week.

[ 1 : 11 ] I'm now going to ask Amon, who's got a little message for us this morning. So Amon, should I come up? I'm not sure how many of you are aware, but the Scottish Government are currently consulting on hate crime legislation.

I don't know how many of you can see that. You might remember there was a poster about, for a while, that Dave Robertson did an article about, and it was the Scottish Government put out saying, Dear Biggers, you can't spread your religious hate here, end of sermon.

Considering hate crime is such a wide subject, the wording of that clearly indicates who they're aiming their message at. I was at a consultation event in Stornoway, and it was wonderful to see so many Christian brothers and sisters there equally concerned about the legislation.

It's pretty, from my perspective, working in the criminal justice system, it's pretty poorly written. It seems to be a knee-jerk reaction, trying to appeal and be all things to all men.

There are worrying things in there, such as it only requires one person to be the witness to an aggravation to a crime.

[ 2 : 26 ] We currently have, in the legal system in Scotland, pretty robust measures, which mean that you need two people. You need at least some form of recognition that one person isn't enough as a witness.

Within this legislation, one person can bring an aggravation to an offence. They're looking at the types of aggravation to extend, to be a number of other offences.

There are a number of other principles in there as well, which cause concern, such as the whole intent bit that we have within aggravations in crime at the moment.

It's almost thrown out, bathing in bathwater. So, advocates have expressed concern, police have expressed concern, a number of others have expressed concern. So far, the Scottish Government have had under 200 responses to this.

The consultation ends on the 24th of February. It's been going for quite a while. If we get together as Christians and we respond to this, we can make a real difference on this.

[ 3 : 37 ] And making sure that it's really poor bit of legislation, which actually people have concern, does target Christians within that. There are concerns about how it will impact on people feeling free to pray, feeling free to preach, feeling free to minister on the street, to share God's word.

We all ought to be concerned about this. There is, the Christian Institute have shared some information. They've got a briefing about the independent review of hate crime in Scotland.

And it talks about how it targets Christians. I won't go into the full detail here, but what I can do is circulate this if people wish for it. I'd suggest if people want to respond and want more information about it, I can print some of these off and share them.

So if there's enough interest from people. At the bottom of the thing from the Christian Institute, it also states how to respond to the consultation. And it's got some suggestions that might just prompt your thoughts.

Obviously, this isn't trying to tell people exactly how to respond, but just give you some ideas about suggestions. So perhaps let some of your elders or deepens know if you'd like copies and I can make them available might be the best way.

[ 4 : 49 ] It's on the next week as well. Okay. Right, thank you. Thanks, Emma. Let's just bow our heads in prayer before we start.

Lord, we thank you for this opportunity this morning again to come together to worship you. We ask you, Lord, to be with us in this service. We ask that each person here will feel the touch of your Spirit on their lives.

Lord, we thank you for this opportunity. That you will speak to us and that our hearts will be opened to whatever you have to say to us. Help us, Lord, as we worship you. Forgive us for our sins. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen. Lord, we thank you for this opportunity. Lord, we thank you for this opportunity. Lord, we just thank you that we can indeed come together and that you are our refuge and our strength. Lord, we pray that will be the case for each person here, Lord, that we will find that in all of life's difficulties and troubles and struggles, whatever they may be, Lord, that we find in you a refuge and our strength.

Lord, we thank you, Lord, that you have given us this opportunity and this freedom.

[ 6 : 11 ] We've already heard the information that there may be even restrictions on such freedoms in the future. Lord, we thank you, Lord, that we, unlike in so many other countries, are able to freely speak the truth of your word, the truth about Jesus Christ, without fear, without the law being against us.

And we know that that is so different in other places. We do pray for our government and our laws that they will be kept so that people can speak freely the truth about Jesus Christ and the way of salvation.

We pray for those who are in other countries who cannot do this without great fear, without fear of death or imprisonment. Lord, we hear even this last week of how churches in China are being destroyed and pastors and other people being locked up if they don't agree completely with the way the government wants them to be as a church.

The house churches in China, which we know are flourishing in many ways, Lord, we pray for them and in the other countries where there is persecution. Lord, we ask you, Lord, we ask you, Lord, to be with all of those who could not be with us here today.

Those who are sick, those who are suffering in any way, we ask you, Lord, to be especially close to them. We pray for those who are bereaved, those who are grieving over the loss of loved ones recently or further into the past.

[ 7 : 49 ] Lord, we ask you, Lord, to be especially close to them today. We pray for those who are suffering from addictions, and we know there are many who are in our own community here.

We pray, Lord, that you would be speaking to them, that you would give them the grace and the strength to be drawn unto Jesus, who is the rock, the one on whom we can stand firmly when temptations and addictions and other things come across our path.

And we ask you, Lord, to be with such people, Lord, and to bring them into the kingdom and give them that wonderful joy, knowing that you love them and that there is nothing, nothing at all, that can separate us from you when we come to Christ.

So, Lord, we commit ourselves once more to you today. We know that we are sinners and that we need you, and we pray, Lord, that you will speak closely into our hearts, shine your light into our hearts today, so that we may respond and that we may respond and that we can walk in your light as you are light.

Your word says, God is light. And Lord, as we look at the scripture which says that, we pray, Lord, that we would learn how to walk daily, moment by moment, in that light, freely confessing our sins and having them purified, ourselves purified and made whole.

[ 9 : 24 ] So, Lord, be with us now. Forgive us for our sins. And we ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen. Amen. And I'm going to turn to our reading this morning, which is from the first letter of John, chapter 1, verse 1.

That's 1 John 1, verse 1. Let's go to read this short chapter.

Let's go to read this short chapter.

Let's go to read this short chapter.

Let's go to read this short chapter.

[ 11 : 26 ] Let's go to read this short chapter. Let's go to read it. Let's go to read this short description, first letter of John 1, chapter 1. And looking from the beginning there, verse 1.

Amen However even though there are many points From this I hope you'll see That the chapter Beautifully holds together It's like a diamond with many facets It all holds together Coherently Logically and beautifully Now the author John Is the disciple of Jesus Who when he wrote this Of course was the Apostle John And he's the same John Who wrote the Gospel of John And the book of Revelation And it's wonderful isn't it To know that this is the same John Who was called by Jesus To follow him From the beginning of Mark's Gospel Do you remember when David was preaching last week I'm pretty sure it was last week That he read that passage Where Jesus is walking along By the shore And John and his brother Were there with the nets And he called him And John the fisherman The man who wrote this Left his nets And followed Jesus Looking at verse 1 I'll just read that That which is from the beginning Which we have heard Which we have seen with our eyes Which we have looked at And our hands have touched This we proclaim Concerning the word of life And we can immediately see the similarities The style even Of the first words of John's Gospel We have here

The word That's Jesus We have the beginning We have the life These are the words The words that are used In the beginning of John's own Gospel Once again John is proclaiming The word The fact that the word The son of God Jesus Was from the beginning of all things Eternal Now the first Point if you like To That I'm going to bring out From this Is the historical reality Of Jesus The historical reality Of Jesus Now there are many people If you ask somebody In the street Or at work Or wherever Who cast doubt Of the truth Of the Gospel accounts Just ask anybody And you'll often get The same Thing Thing Well can we really Really believe That Jesus is Who he says he is And was Exactly as was In the Gospels And maybe there are people Here today Who are having Doubts about that as well And the same was true In the first century When this was written After all John was writing To people Who had not Themselves Seen Jesus Just like us Who had not Themselves Seen him And been with him And it's though It's as though John is trying to Shout from the rooftops That he is a witness Of the reality Of Jesus Coming and living On this earth He had the immense Privilege of being With him During his ministry And we read here From this one verse He heard him That which we have heard He's seen him He's looked at him How many ways Can you Express the fact That he's looked at him With his eyes He's heard him He's seen him He's looked at him And he's touched him This is the physical Reality

[ 15 : 45 ] Of the Lord That he was with This is What he wants To proclaim He says proclaim A number of times In these first few Verses He's proclaiming this First hand knowledge And experience That he's so keen To pass on to us And he continues To emphasise this In the following verses Verse 2 The life appeared We have seen it And testified to it And we proclaim To you The eternal life Which was with the Father And has appeared to us And as if that were Not enough There's verse 3 We proclaim to you What we have seen And heard So that you also May have fellowship With us Now John Was writing At a time When there were Heretics As there are Today Who were distorting The truth About Jesus And suggesting That he didn't Really come As the Son of God

As a physical Human This was one Of the heresies That were going Around at the time And he was Addressing that As one of the Things he was Addressing And they were Even saying That the physical Body is not Very important That it didn't Really matter That he wasn't A physical Being John says Loud and clear That Jesus Actually walked On the earth And was a living Breathing Human being That's what he's Telling us Today as well And how often Do we come Across false Views of Jesus When we Listen to the Radio or the Television or We read books By supposed Experts who Question the Authenticity of The Gospels And who might Even deny the Historical reality Of Jesus And who cast Doubt on the Truth of the Scriptures Written by those Who lived with Jesus And John Is emphatically And joyfully Proclaiming the

Absolute truth Of Jesus He heard him He saw him And he touched Him And there might Be some here Who have some Doubts about it And I hope That today Reading John That eyewitness That we can Come closer To faith In the reality Of Jesus Did Jesus Really come From eternity To save

us How can we Trust the gospel Accounts which Were written so Long ago Many people Saying John helps Us here If we doubt The reality Of the living Jesus coming Into the world And so we need To be encouraged We have in John A first hand Witness of the Events of Jesus' life We can trust Him It rings true He was there Now in a Court of law The best witnesses Are eyewitnesses And if someone In court says

I was there I saw this Happen I spent time Looking at What happened Then this Counts better Than any other Evidence in a Court of law John Stott Says about The evidence The Christian The Christian Message is Neither a Philosophical Speculation Nor a Tentative Suggestion Nor a Modest Contribution To religious Thought But a Dogmatic Affirmation By those Whose experience And commission Qualified them To make it John certainly Was one of Those people And so this First point Is that we Can trust The gospel Accounts Scholars And all Sorts of People Will try To tear Them apart And question Them and Rewrite History Let us Instead have A simple Trust in The writer John Who is Telling us This wonderful Truth He heard He saw He looked

At He touched And now He proclaims This news To us Here In Tarbert On Sunday The 20th 2019 20th of January A long Time has Passed Since that Time But that Doesn't make Any difference To facts Facts Are facts So that's Perhaps The first Thing that we Can take From this Passage The next Thing that Seems to Be emphasised Very strongly By John Here Is fellowship We read In verses 3-4 He says We proclaim To you What we Have seen And heard So that you Also may Have fellowship With us And our Fellowship is With the Father And with His Son Jesus Christ We write This To make Our joy Complete His Principal Aim here Is that we May have Fellowship With him And with All other Believers Now why Is this Important To us Today And why

[ 20 : 48 ] Does he Say that This will Make our Joy His joy Complete Now fellowship Is a very Specific Christian term It's about Having a Common faith With one Another And joins Us together With God One commentator Describes it As that Common Participation In the Grace of God The Salvation Of Christ And the Indwelling Of the Spirit Which is The spiritual Birthright Of all Christian Believers And we're Reminded of The words Of Jesus In John 17 21 When he Prays for All believers For all Of us As well That all Of them May be One Father Just as You are In me And I Am in You Fellowship Is precious Something to Be treasured And encouraged And it's Quite different To all Other forms Of social Gathering Together Another Writer Says of This We cannot

Be content With evangelism Which does Not lead To the Drawing in Of converts Into the Church Nor with The church Life Whose principle Of cohesion Is a superficial Cameraderie Instead of A spiritual Fellowship With the Father And with His Son Jesus Christ And so Fellowship Is something Both practical Coming together And spiritual It is with The Father And with His Son Jesus Christ We can't Manufacture it With just Meeting socially Because we Cannot bypass The essential Elements Of belief Faith And the work Of the Holy Spirit We become Literally One family When we Come to Christ Remember John's Gospel Which says In chapter One Yet to All who Received Him To those Who Believed In His Name He gave The right To become Children Of God Children Born not Of natural Descent Nor of Human Decision Or a Husband's

Will But born Of God God And since Fellowship Is so Important Important Important in God's We must Encourage It And we Must Participate In it We Grow as Christians By meeting Together We need We need We need We need We need We need God with Us And in Us Remember Jesus Of course Said For where Two or Three are Gathered In my Name There Am I With Them And I Know this Is an Old Illustration But it Really does Show a Bit how Important This is If you Take a Coal Out of A fire And leave It on Its own It just Goes out Doesn't It It needs To be In the Fire To keep Burning And so We must Be with One another To keep Spiritually Alert And alive And this Crosses Denominations And cultures And languages There is a Wonderful Fellowship That we Experience Even with Someone who Cannot speak English to Us We had That in Tanzania When we Went out Before we Could speak Swahili We had Fellowship With people Who couldn't Speak our Language Something Supernatural And the Application here Is simple Let us not Give up Meeting Together Let's not See church As just a Sunday morning Event To be ticked Off In and out It does Take effort In our Busy lives I speak to Myself Now It takes Effort To meet Together For fellowship Whether it Be bible Study groups Prayer Meetings Services Youth Meetings And so on But it is Absolutely Vital John Verse 4 Proclaims And writes All this To make His and Our joy Complete He says He's filled With a Sort of Expectant Joy At the Idea of Others Joining in Fellowship With him He's been There with Jesus He wants To gather Us in And he Seems here To be looking Beyond this World alone Because Perfect joy Is not Going to be In this World of Sin It's

not Possible He's looking Forward I think As we Should To the Complete joy Of heaven That lovely Verse in Psalm 16 11 Says In your Presence Is fullness Of joy So that's The historical Reality of Jesus The need Of fellowship And then This whole Thing that we Were talking To the Children About God Being light As we Come to Believe in Our fellowship With one Another We discover One of the Most Wonderful Characteristics Of God John declares That he Is light Look at Verse 5 This is the Message we've Heard from Him and Declared to You God is Light In him

[ 25 : 49 ] There is No darkness At all He's declaring What he has Heard And we read In John's Gospel Chapter 8 Where Jesus Says I Am the Light Of the World What can We make Of this Statement God is Light Firstly I think We can Make Definite Statement That it Is God's Nature To reveal Himself Light Shines And is Visible God Wants Us To know Him Perhaps That's One message That you Might take Home Today That He Wants You He Wants Me To know Him He's Shining His Light He He Doesn't Stop Shining His Light It's Like The Sun Shining Continuously He Is Accessible He Reveals Himself Through His Word And as

We Pray To Him He's Not Hidden Away Light's Also Positive As We Said To The Kids Darkness Is Negative Light Shines And Is Visible Light Always Wins Over The Darkness God's Light Eliminates The Dark John 1 5 The Light Shines In The Darkness But The Darkness Has Not Overcome It When You Shine A Torch In The Dark The Dark Never Lose Does It Light Always Overcomes The Dark And We Can See This In Our Own Lives When We Direct Our Lives To God He Shines His Light Into Us We Find That All The Dark Are Illuminated Now Sometimes This Takes Time Sometimes It's A Struggle And It Requires Our Cooperation But Healing And Purity Come From It We All Need This Light In Our Lives He Is Light There's

A Wonderful Verse That I Came Across In Daniel Which I Didn't Really Know Daniel Chapter 2 Verse 22 He Reveals Deep And Hidden Things He Knows What Lies In Darkness And Light Dwells With Him Light Also Speaks Of Purity God Is Perfectly Pure We Can Completely Trust To God Who Is Pure In Every Way His Love Is Pure John Later States Categorically That God Is Love Pure Love And Lastly But There Are Many Other Aspects To This I'm Sure Light Also Speaks Of His Majesty He Is In Another Sense The Majestic God Who We Cannot See Directly In His Life His Holiness And His Majesty Would Blind Us If We Did Paul Writes In 1 Timothy 6 God The Blessed The Key Of Kings And Lord Of Lords Who Alone Is Immortal And Who Lives In Unapproachable Light Whom No One Has Seen Or Can See To Him Be Honour And Might Forever Amen And Indeed We Are Not Able To Actually See God With Our Eyes Or We Would Be Blinded I Think In This Present Life But This Shows Us The Immense Privilege We Have Through Jesus To Be Able To Approach Him Nevertheless To Be Able To Approach Such An Awesome God And No One Can Approach Him Unless They're Part Of His Family So That Is God Is Light He He He So He He He He His is A Wonderful Truth And Something That Has Helped As I've Personally Helped Me As I've Gone Through This Passage We Read In Verse Six if we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness we lie and do not live by the truth 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 he's warning us here first of all against walking in darkness but in verse 7 he shows us how essential it is to walk in the light what does he mean by walking in darkness he was firstly tackling this heresy what's called the Gnostic heresy that they thought that the body was quite separate from the spirit and that they could do anything in the body they literally believed they could carry on sinning without affecting the spirit he's certainly tackling that that is walking in the darkness and for us we need to guard against claiming that we have fellowship with God without needing to go to the cross of Christ for cleansing and forgiveness we have to remember that sin is a barrier to fellowship with God and our only hope is forgiveness through the cross and there is a brand of Christianity you can walk into some many churches I think which tries to bypass the cross of Christ and yet claim to have fellowship with him and that is impossible but in verse 7 we have this great encouragement to walk in the light what does this mean?

one commentator says it is to have absolute sincerity to be all of a peace in our lives as Christians to have nothing to conceal and to make no attempt to conceal anything I think we know when we've met people who are like that walking consistently in the light there's an openness about them there's a joy of fellowship with the Lord and there's a simplicity in their faith which shines the light back out I think they're the easiest people to be with because they've nothing to conceal there are no hidden motives and when this happens we find the truth of what John says here we have fellowship with one another just openness and oneness in Christ and as we've already said we can't

walk in God's light without confession and cleansing at the cross of Christ and that's confirmed by the last words of verse 7 where he says if we walk in the light of God the blood of Jesus his son purifies us from all sin that word purifies us or cleanses us is present continuous it's an ongoing thing it's not something that is just a one-sore that's very important we then move on to what he's trying to say in verse 8 and verse 10 that we really need to listen to never deny sin never deny sin [ 32:51 ] I'm going to read verses 8 and 10 because they go together if we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us verse 10 if we claim we have not sinned we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives now I don't know about you but if you talk to people who are outside of the church or even to family members who are not Christians it is actually very difficult to talk about sin in this day and age there's a pervasive philosophy or world view which denies sin and we are told to look for the good inside ourselves we're told and many believe that all evil comes from outside of us not from within us and this is one reason why the church is I think held in contempt by so many people particularly the evangelical church because they feel that the church is just interested in pointing at your sin they feel that the church is patriarchal and oppressive they blame us for many problems or if it's not the church then people will blame the politicians or their background or the rich in the country or they might blame the economic system but not ourselves we blame anything or anyone apart from ourselves there's a famous

French philosopher called Rousseau some of you may have heard of him who lived in the 18th century and he claimed that essentially we are all good that if we're left to ourselves without any other influences we are basically very good and everything that's bad or evil has come from without it it's the system it's the rulers it's the people in charge of the country or something else that has caused all the problems and for him in France at that time it was the ruling classes and this is why they had the French Revolution and Rousseau was very very involved in bringing about that revolution in France but what happened there was terrible oppression there were mass executions and he certainly didn't get rid of evil you see Jesus said quite clearly that it is from within us that evil arises Mark 7 20 these are very stark words from Jesus for it is from within out of a person's heart that evil thoughts come sexual immorality theft murder adultery greed malice deceit lewdness envy slander arrogance and folly all these evils come from inside and defile a person now as Christians we don't want to spend our time talking about sin and appearing to condemn others we are told actually not to judge others but what we all need to do is to have a real understanding that what Jesus said is absolutely 100% true sin comes from within us it's also worth saying that you can be a nice sinner you can be a very respectable person a nice person that you get on with and yet be a sinner and this causes confusion I think amongst people they think that if you're a sinner you have to be something terrible a robber or a thief or some other person who's doing terrible things but sin is an estrangement from God it's a rebellion against being with God it's a resistance and an independent attitude to God that's what sin is that's what leads to all the other things there's quite a well known statement which I think is very helpful we're not sinners because we sin we sin because we are sinners

I'll say that again we're not sinners because we sin we sin because we are sinners something deep in us now Selwyn Hughes which I'm actually reading at the moment daily readings he has some very helpful things to say and we are getting quite close to the end of this but I'm going to read this he said of this I think this is important when we talk about sin particularly in preaching and speaking to people he said I think of the services that I attended in my youth during which preachers would lean over the pulpit and with red faces shouted the congregation you miserable sinners God is angry with you get saved before you land up in hell my friends and I viewed these preachers with derision and contempt one night however a preacher came to our church who gently and lovingly told us that God is not against us for our sin but for us against our sin and that statement which is one I've used constantly in my own ministry says led me to dismantle my fences and to allow Jesus to come close to my heart

I think that's very important so sin we cannot deny it but and this is I'm glad we're coming to this wonderful verse 7 verse 9 I should say if we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness so John doesn't leave us there and in this wonderful verse that we should all memorise I think we have the remedy we have the answer we have the glorious truth we must confess we must go to God on our knees if needed but often and regularly confess and we need to be specific about certain sins and name them before God

remember David speaking about this very clearly name specific things before God in our confession and there is this wonderful magnificent promise to a lost soul he is faithful says here he is faithful he will do what he says he is entirely trustworthy the gospel of free forgiveness and grace is true he will forgive and it says here he is also just he will act entirely justly you would think well how can that be just

I'm a sinner why would he forgive me he's just because Jesus the one that John proclaimed so loudly here is the one that took the penalty for our sins on the cross see the end of verse 7 the blood of Jesus his son purifies us from all sin he doesn't only forgive he purifies us we are cleansed we are purified from all not some unrighteousness but all unrighteousness what an amazing promise what an amazing truth we have here some may find this too hard to believe and actually it really is beyond anything we can rationally imagine that God would do but the Gospels and the scriptures tell us again and again and again that this is true he's faithful he's just and he will forgive and purify why would any of us withhold ourselves from such grace such love such forgiveness and so

[ 41 : 01 ] John in this short passage says look I knew him I was with him I heard him I saw him I even touched him he is real and we can have fellowship with one another and with God if you would believe and trust him and we can walk in God's amazing light he is light we are to walk in that light moment by moment and we can come to the realisation that the problem really is sin within us it's no one else's fault but we can receive forgiveness and we can be purified from all unrighteousness if we believe and if we confess our sins let's pray Lord we thank you for this amazing passage of scripture from your disciple John who was with you throughout your ministry who is the witness of everything that you went through even the cross and the resurrection thank you

Lord that he is an eyewitness a perfect witness and so we listen to him and the Holy Spirit speaking through him we ask that each of us Lord would be forgiven and that we can walk in the light that we can be purified from all unrighteousness that we come to you we ask it in Jesus name Amen now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us evermore Amen