

## SESSION 2

# Sure of a Relationship



### **QUESTION 1:**

*Who do you know that almost always exudes confidence?*

## THE POINT

My relationship with God is reflected in how I live.

## THE PASSAGES

1 John 2:3-11,15-17

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Life has a way of surprising us and throwing us into a sea of unknowns. We saw this in early 2020 when a virus from the other side of the globe came crashing down on us.

- ▶ One day parents were dropping their kids off at school. The next day, the schools were closed indefinitely.
- I One day people had steady, stable jobs. The next day, many businesses had to shut their doors indefinitely. For many, not working meant not getting paid. Even worse, many lost their jobs permanently.
- ▶ One day people were free to move about, but suddenly they were cautioned to stay in for fear of catching or spreading the COVID-19 virus.

When life is full of unknowns, confidence and assurance can disappear. In their place come fear and doubt.

We all need confidence and assurance, and when it comes to living the Christian life, confidence and assurance become critical. David Allen said trying to live the Christian life without either is "like driving a car with the brakes on."<sup>1</sup> These passages show us we can take our foot off the brakes!

## **1 John 2:3-6**

**3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.**

**4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**

**5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.**

**6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.**

**KEY WORD: Abideth** (v. 6)—This refers to remaining in God or Christ and reveals a permanent relationship. We cannot claim to abide in Christ unless we live like Him.

In short order in these passages, John used the word *know* four times. John wrote that Christians can know with certainty they are in a relationship with God. Assurance of salvation is based on the right conditions. Living in Oklahoma, we often hear that weather conditions are right for a tornado. The right conditions for **a tornado result from instability in the atmosphere. When warm,** humid conditions in the lower atmosphere make contact with colder conditions in the upper atmosphere, an intense spinning occurs that subsequently produces a tornado.

The right conditions for a Christian to have the assurance of his or her relationship with God result from walking in obedience to God's commands. We don't obey out of legalism, but out of gratitude for all God has given us, especially the gift of His Son.

Obedience happens as we "keepeth his word." This phrase stresses the importance of consistent, continual compliance with the Word of God. We still will falter on occasion, but all true Christians seek to live their lives in obedience to God's commands.

Obedience is the natural outcome of the new birth. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). We demonstrate our love for Jesus through our obedience. Therefore, if we lack assurance of salvation, all we need to do is to look at the pattern of obedience in our lives. Obedience to God's commands doesn't save us; we are saved by grace through our faith in Jesus, the One who kept the law perfectly. Now we obey because we have that relationship. Our obedience reflects our relationship with Christ.

However, for those who don't obey, John had some harsh words: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." It's like the guy who claims to be a football player but never shows up to practice or for the game. His claim is not backed up by reality. Unfortunately, this is the same for many so-called Christians today. They profess Christ without any life change whatsoever. Is this real Christianity? Absolutely not. No Christian obeys perfectly, but every genuine believer has a desire to obey God, and that desire is substantiated by practice. The proof of our love for God is our loyalty and obedience to Him.

True love for God is reflected through gracious obedience to His commands. Throughout John's writing, he reminded us of the call to love others (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-11). Let's put this together. God loves us. We love Him in return (449) and we show that love by obeying His command to love one another. God's love has worked on us and in us. In this way "is the love of God perfected," meaning it is maturing us and pointing to our conversion and transformation.

#### **QUESTION 2:**

***What do you find challenging about walking in Jesus' footsteps?***

If you desire to obey the Word out of gratitude for all Christ has done for you, and if you see that desire producing an overall pattern of obedience, then you have no reason to doubt your salvation. Your relationship with God is reflected in how you live.

**1 John 2:7-11**

**7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.**

**8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.**

**9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.**

**10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.**

**11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.**

"Love" or "loveth" repeatedly shows up in 1 John. It appears 24 times in the 105 verses that make up this letter. In this passage John wrote of love as both an old and new commandment. Love is an old commandment in that it is mentioned in the Old Testament law (Lev. 19:17-18; Deut. 6:5). In fact, Jesus said the entirety of the law could be summed up in the commands "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-40).

So, in what sense is the old commandment also new? We see the newness of this old commandment in how Christ perfectly obeyed and manifested it. Up to that point, no one had demonstrated love perfectly on earth. Jesus fully and perfectly demonstrated *agape* love like no one before Him ever had. He showed us what obedience to these commands looks like. Jesus told His disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another;

as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). Shortly before He spoke these words, Jesus had even given them an example of love by washing their feet. Love humbly serves others no matter how insignificant the task.

Love is the highest virtue a person can express toward another. It's the attribute God revealed when He gave His Son to die on the cross. Through the definition of *agape* love found in 1 Corinthians 13, we realize love is the bond that unites the church. Love is the ingredient that propels missions, and it's the fuel that ignites revival. When God's children choose to love, they walk in the light, and the darkness flees. For this reason, John wrote, "Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now."

The *light* John referred to is God's kingdom, which was inaugurated at Christ's first coming: "the true light now shineth." Jesus is "the light of the world" (John 8:12), and His kingdom is characterized by both light and love. Our love for God and for others is proof we are citizens of that heavenly kingdom.

**The light of Christ is here, but the darkness is not fully eradicated—yet.** I recently watched an episode of *Painting with Bob Ross* on TV. In this particular program, Ross started with a dark canvas. He began adding touches of yellow, orange, and red, creating light for the painting. Soon the light began to overtake the darkness of the canvas. By the time he finished, the darkness didn't look so dark anymore. Christ is victorious. Christians are the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:14) and as citizens of Christ's kingdom of light, we push back the darkness when we walk in love. "But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

Loving as Christ loves doesn't come easily. Love can be costly. The love of the Good Samaritan cost him (Luke 10:30-36). God's

love for us led Him to the costly sacrifice of His Son. But when we love sacrificially, we are reflecting the love of God, and we are reflecting a right relationship with God. Of course, there will be times when we don't love as we should, but the Christian life is characterized by light, not darkness; love, not hate.

**QUESTION 3:**

***How would you describe spiritual blindness?***

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**1 John 2:15-17**

**15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

**16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.**

**17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.**

**In** the previous section, John taught us the critical importance of loving our brothers and sisters, but there is a limit in what we are to love. We are to love "not the world, neither the things that are in the world." When John used the word *world*, he was not referring to the people who inhabit this planet. That would be a glaring contradiction to what he wrote in his Gospel: "For God so loved the world" (John 3:16). Nor was John's use of *world* referring to creation. It would be a contradiction to love God if we hated what He created. Instead, John was talking about the organized evil system of darkness that encompasses this world. This sin-filled, worldly mind-set is manifested in those actions and attitudes that oppose the things of God.

The world's temptations can be grouped into three categories:

- 1. The lust of the flesh.** This is the desire for selfish pleasure, the person who cares more about himself than others. Most of the time this particular temptation manifests itself in self-centeredness and narcissism.
- 2. The lust of the eyes.** This type of temptation is tied to the greedy longing for gain, always wanting more but never satisfied. This particular temptation usually reveals itself through coveting and feeding our physical desires. The person who gives into this sin is always wanting the upgrade: the newer car and the bigger house.
- 3. The pride of life.** This temptation refers to envy and the love of popularity, recognition, and applause. People falling captive to this temptation are held captive by the show of materialism. Folks caught in this sin love to brag. They are show-offs who like to put their possessions on display for others to see.

Satan and the world are good at marketing these sins to us. This is nothing new. Even the first sin committed included these worldly attitudes. "And when the woman saw that the tree was **good** for food [the lust of the flesh], and that it was pleasant to the eyes [lust of the eyes], and a tree to be desired to make one wise [the pride of life], **she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat**" (Gen. 3:6).

#### QUESTION 4:

***What are some things in the world we are tempted to love?***

The world appeals to humanity's greatest needs—including the need to belong and the need to have meaning—but it tempts us to meet these needs in wrong ways. It is utter foolishness to fall in love with the things of the world, no matter how appealing they may appear. Why? Because "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." The ways of the world are worthless and heartbreaking. It's coming to an end.



The great news is that "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." God provides us so much more than what the world offers—and it lasts. Only God can give meaning, hope, and comfort through life's trials and tribulations. Jesus invited us to "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). The person who seeks the things of God rather than the things of the world is someone who is prepared for eternity—and you can be assured of that. Let your life reflect your relationship with God.

**QUESTION 5:**

***How can our group help one another overcome the ways of the world in our lives?***

**ENGAGE**

***Choose one of the following images that best represents an opportunity for you to live obediently this week. Then ask God for strength to make it happen.***



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## LIVE IT OUT

My relationship with God is reflected in how I live. Choose one of the following applications:

**I Examine your life.** Consider the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. If, after examining your life, you feel as though you have fallen short in manifesting a true Christian's character, then repent and trust in Christ now.

**I Align your life.** Perhaps through this study, you have been assured of your relationship with God. However, you also realize there are a few **things in your life** that need to be realigned under God's will. If so, **begin making those changes** this week.

**I Make a difference in someone else's life.** Be intentional this week to share about your relationship with Christ. Look for opportunities to serve someone, and when you see it, don't hesitate. Serving others gives a great opportunity for sharing the gospel.



### END NOTES

1. David Allen, *1-3 John: Fellowship in God's Family (Preaching the Word)* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 61.