

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to 1 John 2

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through 1 John

This small but very powerful and practical letter that the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle John to write to us remind us about the reality of who God is, the reality of who Jesus is, and the reality of what it means to be a Christian –

And so John has provided these tests so that we can examine ourselves to help us determine whether we have true fellowship with God or whether we are simply self-deceived into thinking that we have true fellowship with God.

One of the tests focuses is a moral test.

Has our life been changed by our fellowship with God?

Do we walk in obedience?

Has our heart changed? Thoughts?

One of the tests focuses on our relationships with one other?

Do we genuinely enjoy fellowship with one another?

Do we love one another?

Or do we hate others? – we looked at this one in our study last week.

In our text this morning – John is going to provide another test for us –

And this test will cause us to examine our walk – to see whether or not there is spiritual growth and John will also provide for us the key to spiritual growth.

**Let's pray...**

**[1Jo 2:12-14 NKJV] 12 I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. 13 I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him [who is] from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. 14 I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him [who is] from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.**

Someone once said that there are three stages in life.

There is a stage when we believe in Santa Claus

Then we move to the stage where we don't believe in Santa Claus

And finally – we move to the stage where we begin to look like Santa Claus

Someone else said – no,no,no there are four stages in life

Infancy stage,

Childhood stage

Young Adulthood stage and

Then there is the, “Hey, You look good for your age” stage

I think that is the stage I am in right now

I like that one better than the Santa Claus one.

The point is – there is a progression as we age.

One of the things that Bridget did with our girls –as they were growing up, on the entrance to our walk-in closet, she would have them stand against the door and mark their height with their initials and age.

So, we have a visual representation of their physical growth.

Through photos, videos and such, we all have a visual representation of our growth – as we aged, as we matured physically.

John is going to pose the question –

What about our spiritual maturity?

How are we doing?

Where are we at?

Can we articulate our growth as a believer?

In the same way we look at pictures of our children and see pictures of them crawling to walking to graduating from school to getting married –

Are we able to do the same for our own spiritual walk?

Do we see growth?

Has Jesus changed us?

Has He changed our outlook and attitude toward others?

Do we remember where spiritually we were when we began our walk with Him, abiding in Him?

**[1Jo 2:12-14 NKJV] 12 I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.**

I had you make a note of the phrase little children – and the reason is because in the very next verse, we are going to see the English translation of little children – but John is going to use a different Greek Word that means something very different.

The word that John uses for little children is the same word that we see in verse 1

**[1Jo 2:1 NKJV] 1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**

The phrase means born ones or offspring

So not only is John speaking to all believers

He is reminding us of our spiritual rebirth.

That is what it means to be a Christian -

**[Jhn 3:3 NKJV] 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

**[Jhn 3:6 NKJV] 6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."**

So who are these little children?

These are the new born Christians

He is talking about you and me

These are the people who have heard the gospel and experienced His grace and His mercy.

**[Jhn 1:12 NKJV] 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:**

The emphasis here is not on the age – the emphasis is on everyone who has experienced what it means to be born again

Those who have a real relationship with God in Christ

Everyone who believes in Jesus who has repented of their sin,

Everyone who has come to faith.

So question – what is one of the first things that a born again Christian experiences?

Forgiveness of sin.

October 25, 1991

Friday afternoon

I was 18 years old

Had a five minute conversation with an assistant pastor – but God had been tugging at my heart for some time.

But the one thing that I will never forget about that day

Is the feeling of that weight that was taken off my shoulders as I experienced cleansing and forgiveness – knowing that my sins had been washed away.

Knowing that my sins were forgiven

Knowing that God doesn't hold anything against me anymore

Knowing that at that moment – I had peace with God.

Why didn't I do this earlier in my life?

Why was I so stubborn?

I could have known that my sins are forgiven – past, present and future.

All because of the sacrifice that He made on Calvary.

But notice the end of verse 12 – very important.

For His name sake

We are forgiven for His name sake

We are not forgiven simply because we feel forgiven.

We are not forgiven simply because we desperately want to be forgiven.

John places the reality of forgiveness in the very identity of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done.

And everyone who is born again – shares in that reality.

Jesus is our sin bearer.

He has forgiven us

He has cleansed us

But what John is going to emphasize is that there is more than simply having experienced the knowledge of having experienced the forgiveness of sin.

We are called to grow – to mature

Turn to 2 Timothy 3

**[2Ti 3:14-17 NKJV] 14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned [them], 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

This letter to Timothy – was the last letter that Paul wrote before he was killed.

And Paul exhorts Timothy to continue in the things – to continue to mature / to continue to grow.

Much in the same way that Paul lived his life.

Paul was providing this exhortation from his own experience.



Let's get back to the text.

**13 I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him [who is] from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father.**

So I talked about earlier about the stages of life.

Here John makes a distinction between the stages of our spiritual maturity

We can be spiritual fathers

We can be spiritual young men

We can be spiritual little children

And so – what I want to do here in verse 13

Is to look at each one of these stages but I want to look at them in reverse order –

So, let start off with the spiritual little children –

**I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father.**

Remember, I told you earlier that the little children in this verse is different that the little children in verse 12

The word that is used here for little children isn't the word born ones – it is a word that means infants.

It is a word that is used to describe children that were still being breast fed.

And I believe that the reason that John uses this term is because he wants to remind us that it doesn't matter what spiritual stage we are – at one point in our spiritual walk – we were all spiritual infants.

And there are two things that spiritual infants share –

The first one, we talked about earlier is that we are forgiven

The second one is that we know the Father

I used the Spanish word “conocer” last week where it speaks of an intimate personal knowledge of someone – not just intellectually knowing of Him

And as we grow in our personal knowledge of Him - it means that our love for Him grows but also that we begin to despise and hate what the Father hates.

Keep this in mind for next week's study –

Because next week in verse 15 –

**[1Jo 2:15 NKJV] 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

So John is saying that the growing maturing Christians does not love the things that stand in opposition to God.

So the point that John is making here is that spiritual infant Christian – they find comfort, peace and security in the presence of God – much in the same way that an infant will find comfort, peace and security in the presence of his or her mom or dad.

The infant Christian may not be proficient in Christianese but they know that they are saved and they know their heavenly Father.

The spiritual infant will lack discernment like most infants do

But they eventually grow up.

What is needed for growth? Food

Why are we all here this morning? Spiritual food

Why do we spend so much time reading the bible, studying the bible, meditating on His word? – because this is food.

**[1Pe 2:2 NKJV] 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,**

If we don't desire the good stuff – we are simply not going to grow.

The next stage that John writes about –

**I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one.**

John is writing about believers that are more mature –

These are believers who not only know the Lord and have experienced the forgiveness of the Lord -

They are strong and they are ready to fight

They recognized that the real battle is a spiritual one

Against the enemy, against the flesh and against those that are in opposition to God.

And this group continues to be steadfast in their walk in the Lord.

The third stage that John brings up is the spiritual fathers.

**I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him [who is] from the beginning.**

Here John is talking about men and women who are mature in the faith

Why?

Because they know Jesus

How?

From the beginning –

Which is a reference to the beginning of the ministry to Jesus

**[1Jo 1:1 NKJV] 1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—**

So John is referring to those who have and continue to have intimate fellowship with God.

They have the kind of walk with God that doesn't come overnight.

They have deep roots in the Lord

These are the individuals who continue to defend the truth.

Paul in his letter to Titus –

He is giving instruction for Titus on selecting leaders in the church -

**[Tit 1:9 NKJV] 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.**

Just like John – these spiritual father can help guide and encourage and be an example to those who are at a lower spiritual stage than they are.

In the same way that Paul was a spiritual father to Timothy

**14 I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him [who is] from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.**

So here in verse 14 –

John addresses the spiritual father and the young men

Now, when we look at verse 14 – as John addresses the fathers, we might say, wait a minute, John simply repeats himself.

But the key in verse 14 – is that John uses the phrase I have written.

Past tense.

In verse 13 –

I write to you –

Present tense.

So what John's point here in verse 14 – is that one of the characteristics of maturity is to know more than we used to know.

Even as spiritual fathers – our knowledge of God is to continue to grow.

We will never come to the point where we can say – “I have learned enough of God – I know all I can know”

You see church, spiritual maturity is not based upon how many years we say we have been a Christian.

One person may say – “I have been a Christian for 50 years” and still be spiritually immature.

Spiritual maturity is based upon how much we know Him and that knowing is only made known through intimate fellowship with Him.

Through abiding in Him, through reading and meditating upon His word, through our conversations with Him.

Listen to what Paul wrote the church in Corinth – while he was in prison -

**[Phi 3:10 NKJV] 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,**

Paul wanted to grow in the knowledge of the Lord.

Can you imagine being in prison – chained to a Roman soldier and asking Paul late in his life, what do you want more than anything else?

His response, I want to know more of Jesus

I want to understand more about Jesus

I want to love Him more

I want to comprehend who He is and what He has done

Paul wanted to grow in the knowledge of the Lord.

What about us?

Because if we think that we know as much as possibly that we can know about Him –

John is saying that we are still spiritually immature.

We are no spiritual fathers.

Turn to 1 Cor 4

**[1Co 4:14-16 NKJV] 14 I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn [you]. 15 For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet [you do] not [have] many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you, imitate me.**

Paul in his letter –

Saw that the church in Corinth was very immature church – they lacked spiritual fathers in the church – so he says, look to me.

Follow my example.

Now, what are some of the characteristics of spiritual fathers?

One characteristic of a spiritual father is reproduction.

And by reproduction – I mean,



That the spiritual father is the individual who take seriously the call to encourage and “disciple” those who are younger in the faith.

The spiritually mature individual will want to lead others to Christ – because they themselves have been brought to Christ.

The spiritually immature person – will not lead others to Christ

Another characteristic of a spiritual father is confrontation.

Question?

Would I be a good parent if I don't confront my kids – if I let them do whatever they feel like doing?

I said earlier that children lack discernment – sometimes, the right choices are not made.

As a father of two girls, it is my duty to warn them about the truth of what lies out in the world.

I would be a bad parent if I did not confront them of these dangers.

The same thing can be said about a spiritual father.

They are able to warn people / confront people about the truth.

The spiritual father speaks to the human heart with the word of God about the things that matter. To speak the truth – in love.

So we have reproduction, confrontation

And the third characteristics – imitation.

That is exactly what Paul said – right?

Imitate me.

Paul was talking about his life an illustration -

Of what it means to know, to love and honor and serve the Lord.

I like this poem from an old dead guy -

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

Are read by more than a few,

But the one that is most read and commented on

Is the gospel according to you.

You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day

By the things that you do and the words that you say,

Men read what you write, whether faithless or true,

Say, what is the gospel according to you'

And we finish our text with John's exhortation to the young men again in verse 14

**I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.**

Again, very similar to what John wrote in verse 13

So John is reminding this group that in their growth, they have come to the place where they understand the tactics that the enemy uses to try to make them stumble and they are willing to take the necessary resources to enter into the fight.

What John is saying here is that this group – because the word of God abides in them – they are no longer pushovers.

The immature believer is the one who is the soft target

They are the ones that are constantly being pushed over by the enemy

They are the ones that are constantly intimidated by the enemies tactics.

Those that are the ones constantly struggling with temptation.

And so, John tells us that the secret to spiritual maturity is to allow the word of God to dwell in us.

That is what the word abides means – to stay connected to

It is a part of who we are.

It is a part of who we were meant to be.

Do we know Him and does His Word abide in us?

That is the key to spiritual growth.

And here is the thing church -

And when we get a grip on the word of God – it gets a grip on us.

Amen

Let's pray...

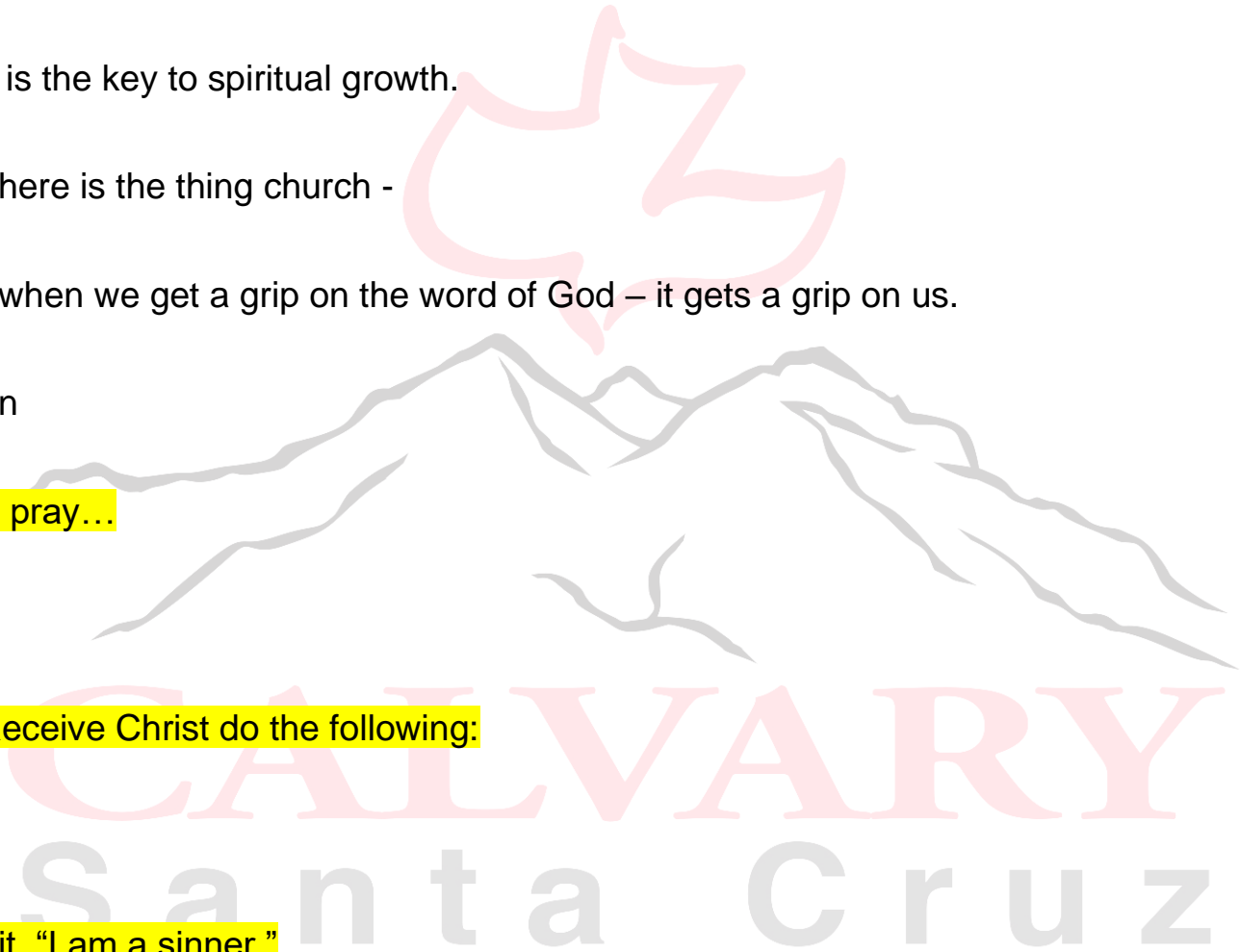
To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.



Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "Every man over forty is responsible for his face"

What he was saying is that we can all play the card that if you don't like the way I look – you can blame my mother or my father.

But Lincoln says – no.

His point was -

Our face reflects our personality.

Anger, bitter,

Our face will tell us what kind of life we lived –

And the same can be said about our spiritual face and our spiritual personality.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

