

Bibles???

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

Please turn your bibles with me to 1 John 2

We are going to continue our verse-by-verse study through list short but very powerful, practical and personal letter that the Apostle John wrote to his spiritual children – (including 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 the central theme throughout this letter is one of fellowship.

Not just any fellowship

But, true fellowship

Genuine fellowship with God – which then leads to true fellowship with one another.

How do we know if we have true fellowship?

John provides some tests for us to examine ourselves.

So in our text today –

John is going to provide for us two more tests that we can take to determine whether or not we do have fellowship with God

One of the tests will be a moral test and the second test will be a test on how we relate to each other in love.

Let's pray...

Read text –

There was a television show – way before my time – back in the 50's and 60's

Hosted by Art Linkletter

And in the show he would interact with children

He would ask them questions and sometimes their responses were unexpected – that is what made the show funny.

One time, he asked this young girl what her favorite bible story was –

Her response, when Jesus turned water into wine.

His follow up question was – what did you learn from that story?

And the little girl responded, “I learned that when you run out of wine, to get on your knees and pray”

Another time, he came up to a boy who was drawing a picture –

So he asked the child, “What are you drawing?”

The child responded, “I am drawing a picture of God”

Art told the young boy that no one knows what God looks like, to which the boy responded, “They will when I get through.”

Since the beginning of time – there have been people claiming that they know God, people that will offer explanations of what God is really like, people that will paint of picture of God and then expect one to believe it.

But in reality – these individuals had no idea of who God is – they had no true fellowship with God –

But John writes this letter to tell us that if we really want to know God – if we really want to know what He is like and have fellowship with Him

– John invites us to look to Jesus

Because Jesus is the reliable picture

Now, for the past few weeks – in our study through chapter one and the first two verses in ch 2 – John has reminded us that there is one thing that hinders our fellowship with God – sin

[Isa 59:1-2 NKJV] 1 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden [His] face from you, So that He will not hear.

But John has also given us the good news, in that God, has made provisions to deal with the sin in our lives.

Two weeks ago, we looked at how Jesus is the propitiation for our sins – how He is our Advocate who stands before the Father

Yes, as believers, we will continue to sin –

But when we are convicted, when we repent, we are cleansed – we are forgiven, we are made righteous and so we can continue to have fellowship with Him.

[1Jo 2:3-11 NKJV] 3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

Question – is it possible to know God?

Can we know Him intimately?

John's answer – yes, Jesus has made it possible.

By this we know that we know Him

In the Spanish language – there are two words for the word know.

Saber and conocer

The word saber is more related to knowledge and ability

Sabes donde esta McDonalds?

Do you know where McDonalds is? (intellectual)

However, the word conocer – which is derived from the Greek word that is used refers to knowing personally.

Yo conosco el hermano RJ –

I know my brother RJ

I know him, I know him personally, he is my bro.

And the longer I fellowship with him, the more I get to know him personally.

This is what John is saying about our fellowship with God

We can know Him personally and get to know Him more and more as we walk alongside Him.

If – we keep His commandments

So draw an arrow from the word “know” to the word “keep”

Because as John points out – they are connected.

We will know Him if we keep His commandments.

Now, the word keep, means to guard or to treasure.

It carries the idea of a careful watch.

So, as we obey the word of the Lord – we enter into this intimate fellowship with the Lord.

Knowing Him is abiding in Him – we looked at that when we covered the Gospel of John.

So, as we abide in Him, we grow in His grace and in His righteousness – because He is righteous.

[Jhn 14:15 NKJV] 15 “If you love Me, keep My commandments.

So, obedience then determines whether or not we have intimate fellowship with Him.

Please don't misunderstand what John is saying here and mistake it for legalism.

Obedience to God's word and Jesus' commandments given to us isn't legalism – it is love.

“If you love Me, keep My commandments.

Those were Jesus' words – not my words.

Obedience therefore can't be legalism – it is love.

The difference between love and legalism is that legalism is when my opinion becomes your obligation.

Think of the legalists in the early church – who were telling people that they were not really saved unless they were circumcised or unless they adhered to the Mosaic law.

They were adding to the work of Jesus on the cross.

Keeping His commandments – those are Jesus' words.

[Jhn 15:10 NKJV] 10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

Again, we are not being forced to keep His commandments – we are being obedient by responding to the grace and mercy He has already bestowed upon us – in love.

4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Remember the context –

When John was writing this to the early church in general –

The Gnostics were going around saying that they could live the way they wanted to because God still loved them and God really didn't care how they lived.

But John argues here that if we know God, if we have true fellowship with God, then, we will be able to keep His commandments.

Because He is going to give us anything we need to please Him

A real encounter with Jesus will change us.

Having true fellowship with God changes us.

This is the first test of whether a person truly knows God.

People who say they know God but who live in willful flagrant disobedience lifestyle of sin – John says that they are liars.

– again, I am not talking about when we stumble or when we fall or have an event

I am talking about a lifestyle of disobedience –

And that is exactly what some of those that were teaching this false doctrine were doing.

So John says, don't listen to them – they may talk like if they have fellowship with God, but their actions reveal that they don't.

Knowing God means that we know and experience Him and because we know Him – our lives are changed.

It is not us pretending to be different – it is us being different because of what God has done inside of us and what He will continue to do as we abide in Him.

5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

So in verse four, we have those who failed the test, and here in verse five, we have those who passed the test.

Now, I want to make sure that we grasp what John is saying in this verse.

But whoever keeps His word – John is referring to those who abide in Him, those who have true fellowship with Him, those who know Him.

Now, we would expect John to say the following –

“Whoever keeps His word, truly the knowledge of God is perfected in him”

But John doesn't use the word knowledge – he uses the word love.

Because what John is saying is that real knowledge and real experience of God produce love.

It helps if we think of that word perfected as maturity or growing up

Our obedience to the Lord results in a mature loving relationship with God.

And when we learn to put “obedience to God as our priority”, we will experience God's love in a deeper, more mature way.

6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

This is the second time that John uses the phrase – He who says

And what John is saying here is that as we abide in Christ, we are going to be more Christlike in our actions.

[Jhn 15:4-7 NKJV] 4 “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 “I am the vine, you [are] the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw [them] into the fire, and they are burned. 7 “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

Abiding is the intimate fellowship we have with Jesus

His life as the “vine” will flow through us as the branches and produce “fruit” or “results”.

Because Jesus walked in obedience to God, then His obedient life will flow through us to help us walk in obedience to God.

How did Jesus walk?

In complete submission and obedience to His Father

If we abide in Him, then we walk in the light – because He is light.

We walk in truth

We walk in hope

We walk in wisdom

We walk in love

To walk just as Jesus walked means to love what He loves

So we practice self sacrifice

It means to hate what He hates

So we hate sin

Why is obedience important?

Because when we obey God's agenda, we have to abandon our own agenda.

We acknowledge His sovereignty.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. 8 Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

The word brethren at the beginning of verse 7 –

And the reason that it is significant is that the Apostle John will use this word six different times in this short letter.

And the word that he uses here is not the word for brother – but for beloved.

John is writing to a group of people who he cared deeply about.

And the commandment that he speaks of here in verse 7 is the commandment of love.

Turn your bibles to Mark 12

[Mar 12:28-34 NKJV] 28 Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" 29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments [is]: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This [is] the first commandment. 31 "And the second, like [it, is] this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

In Jesus' response to the scribe –

Jesus quotes from Deut 6:4-5 – the love that we are to have concerning God

Leviticus 19:18 – the love that we are to have concerning one another

These two commandments summarize the 10 Commandments that were given to the Children of Israel

How we are to relate to God

And how we are to relate to one another

Later on – in John's gospel

Jesus will tell His disciples and us -

[Jhn 13:34 NKJV] 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Jesus takes the commandment from Leviticus – the old commandment and makes it new by interpreting it and applying it in a fresh way.

You see -

The believer's heart has been transformed with the love of God

We have experienced the love of Jesus

We have been changed by that love so we then share that love with others.

We don't keep that love among ourselves.

Jesus didn't simply teach His disciples to love one another

Jesus lived out that love in His own life and His own ministry

Jesus didn't simply invite His disciples to love one another.

He doesn't simply invite us to have warm fuzzy feeling for each other.

He invites us to examine His life / consider what He did and walk just as He walked (which is the same thing that John told us back in vs 6)

I had you make a note of the beginning of verse 8 - a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you

The love of God is true in Jesus

And John is saying here that the love of God is true in the believer.

We have been assigned to be lights in this darkened, sin-sick world, until He returns

We are to shine as lights in the world and reflect the love of God in our lives.

9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.

If someone were to ask you – are you a Christian?

What would be your response?

John is saying here that a confession or a profession of faith – it is not just something that we claim – because we can all claim to anything

But it is evidenced by the change of our heart

In the bible, hatred is linked to darkness and blindness

The person who hates refuses to grant the same forgiveness or mercy desired for oneself.

Think about this – when we go before God, we seek mercy.

When someone does something against us – and we go before God, what do we seek for them? Mercy or judgment?

Sometimes it is easy to think, “Following Jesus would be easy if it weren’t for all the Christians.”

And, yes we get hurt by other believers and some of us may have scars.

Yet this measure still stands.

If we can’t love each other, then we have no way to claim a real love for God.

Our relationship with God can be measured by our love for other Christians.

10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

The word that is used here for stumbling – in the Greek – it is the word where we get “scandal” from

Love prevents the scandals of division of quarrels and contention among Christians.

Love as it is defined in the bible

Love as it is meant and expressed in the Person of Jesus Christ

So, why is it so hard to love the people that God has asked us to love?

Because it has to come from within

Love is a willingness to think and act and speak in a way that is in the best interest of the person that we love.

11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Hatred is always possible, when we step out of the light

Hatred is always possible, when we step out of the light

When we stand in the light, when we walk in the light, as we abide in Him – there is a good chance we will be just fine

But the moment we take a step away from the gospel, one step away from Jesus, one step away from love, one step away from the light?

We become vulnerable.

We become the person who lives in constant anger

We become the person who is always bitter

We become the person who is always self absorbed

John says – that this person walks in darkness

This person lacks direction – how do we know? Because they are blinded

Later on in his letter, John is going to say

[1Jo 3:15 NKJV] 15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Some wise person made the observation that the reason that people cling to their hate over someone else is because once they let go of the hate – they feel that they will have to relive the pain that the person caused them.

So as long as they continue to hate – they numb the pain that was caused to them.

John is not telling that individual to simply let go of the hate and deal with the pain

He is telling the person to allow the hatred and the pain to be substituted with a genuine relationship with God.

An old dead guy –

“If I hate or despise any one man in the world, I hate something which God cannot hate, and despise that which He loves”

If you are thinking “But I just can’t”

**[1Jo 5:3 NKJV] 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.
And His commandments are not burdensome.**

The Holy Spirit will give us the grace and the power to obey His commands.

It is not optional – it is essential.

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,



SANTA CRUZ
CATHEDRAL

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.

If we lose love then we lose everything.

There is nothing left.

We can do all the right things, believe all the right truths, but if we do not love other Christians, then all is lost.

[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.'