

CHRISTIANITY *(defined)*
A Study of 1 John
“Birthmarks of a Believer”

1 John 5:1-6

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INTRODUCTION: Not knowing the meaning of something can get you in trouble. True story, a lady texted her grown son about a death in the family. She texted: “Your great aunt just passed away. LOL.” Her son responded, “Why is that funny?” She wrote, “It’s not funny, David! What do you mean?” He said, “Mom, lol means laughing out loud!” She said, “Oh my goodness!! I send that to everyone I thought it meant lots of love. Now, I have to call everyone back!” 1 John is an LOL book because it is full of lots of love.

Today we’re going to talk about BIRTHMARKS OF A BELIEVER. About ten percent of children are born with some kind of physical birthmark. A couple of famous people with visible birthmarks include **Mikhail Gorbachev**, who was Soviet President and helped end the cold war has a large port-wine birthmark on his head. New Orleans Saints QB, **Drew Brees**, has a prominent birthmark on the right side of his face. He’s worth \$160 Million. When asked why he doesn’t have it removed, he says that it sends a positive message to young people to not be afraid of their imperfections.

I have a birthmark underneath my wallet, so you’ll appreciate the fact that I won’t show it. Some birthmarks are small and hidden, and some are large. Singer/songwriter, Ed Sheeran, was born with a large port-wine birthmark on his face, and he had it removed with laser therapy. Whether or not you have a physical birthmark, the fact that you’re here today proves that you have been born physically. When humorist **Will Rogers** applied for a passport, he was told he needed his birth certificate. He asked why. They said, “To prove that you were born.” He replied, “Well, I’m here, ain’t I?”

The Christian life involves a second birth. And there are some specific birthmarks of a believer. Let’s read about them in 1 John 5:1: **Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and**

everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of him. (Here's birthmark #1): This is how we know that we love God's children: when we love God and obey his commands. (Here's birthmark #2) For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands. And his commands are not a burden, (here's birthmark #3) because everyone who has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith. Who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? Jesus Christ—he is the one who came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and by blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

Today, we use the three circles to explain to someone how to place their faith in Christ. It's a great method that I encourage everyone to learn. If you don't already have the app called Life On Mission, I encourage you to download it. It's free. When I'm beginning a gospel conversation, I usually ask them a diagnostic question like this. "Have you come to a place in your life where you know for certain you have eternal life and that you will go to Heaven when you die?" I've asked thousands of people that question. You will always get one of three responses. A true Believer will say "Yes!" Some people will say, "I'm not sure." Others are honest enough to say, "No." If they are unsure or answer in the negative, I ask their permission to share the good news about Jesus with them. Can you answer, "yes" to that question? In this passage of scripture, we're going to focus on three birthmarks of a believer:

1. A true Believer demonstrates a love for God's children. This passage says that we will love God and we will love God's children. Just as it is God's nature to love His children, we also love His children. If you're a parent can you think back to when your children were born? There's always something miraculous about that first moment that you are a parent.

For Cindy and me it happened on Mother's Day, May 14 of 1978. Cindy first became a mother on Mother's Day – now that's REAL planned parenthood! We had decided to go with an all-natural birth, so we took Lamaze childbirth classes. It was a team approach. I was her breathing

coach. And we rehearsed it over and over again. I had read in the book that the contractions would start with long intervals and then as they gradually became closer together, you would calmly and carefully drive to the hospital. That's not what happened. I think I did a poor job with timing the contractions, or maybe Jenni was just in a hurry to get here. Cindy let me know in very strong language we needed to leave for the hospital. In Lamaze, we learned that you never use the word pain – that's too pejorative. You use the word discomfort. Cindy was in extreme discomfort. It was 4 in the morning – all interstate 20 into Montgomery, and I made the 30-mile trip in about 15 minutes. We had called before we left home, so when we pulled into the ER, a nurse was waiting with a wheel chair. She told Cindy to relax, that this was her first child and we had plenty of time. Then the nurse did a quick visual exam and screamed, "Call Dr. Johnson stat!!"

Meanwhile I parked the car and ran in and got into the sterile gown, gloves, and mask. I was ready to start coaching. By the time I got into the labor and delivery, Jenni was already arriving. No coaching was needed. She was born 21 minutes after we arrived at the hospital.

I looked at that little bundle of beauty and in a split second I learned more about God than I had in all my years of theological training. I understood that just as I naturally loved that little girl, that my Heavenly Father has that kind of love for me, multiplied by a trillion. It was my nature to love her. When Laura Grace was born a few years later, it was the same thing. Nobody had to teach me to love my children – it was part of my nature. And whether or not you have ever been a parent, it is part of our supernatural nature to love God's children.

So how do you know if you love God's children? We find the answer in 1 John 3:16. Everyone knows John 3:16 from memory. 1 John 3:16 is worth memorizing as well: **"This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters."** Loving others means you lay down your life for them. Let me give you an example of this from the Bible.

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were arrested. A Roman soldier used a whip to lash their backs until they were a bleeding mess. Then he threw them into a prison and chained their feet and hands in stocks. But rather than

moaning about their pain, that night Paul and Silas were singing songs of praise to God. Suddenly there was an earthquake, and their chains were shaken loose and the prison doors fell off.

The Roman guard assumed the prisoners had escaped, which would result in his death. So he took his sword and was ready to fall on it when Paul yelled, “Don’t do it. We’re all still here!”

The Roman soldier grabbed a lantern and walked into the prison. When he saw the prisoners were still there, he fell on his knees and cried out, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved – and your whole family can be saved.” By the way, if you’re wondering, “What can I do to be saved?” The answer is the same. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” Then the jailer invited Paul and Silas into his home, where Paul shared the Gospel with them. The jailer took a wet cloth and washed the wounds of Paul and Silas. Then he and his family believed and were baptized that same night.

Did you notice the transformation? Hours earlier he was lashing their backs with a whip. Now, he was washing their backs with a soft cloth. What was the difference? He had been born again, and now he had a love for Paul and Silas. He was laying down his life for them because he had been saved.

That’s the first birthmark. Do you have a genuine love for God’s children? Are you willing to lay down your life for them?

2. A true Believer has a longing for God’s commandments. In verse three we read: **“For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands.”** Let’s say I were to ask you, “Do you love God?” You would say, “Oh yeah, sure. I love God. Amen. Praise the Lord!” But then if I were to ask you, “Do you have a longing to keep His commandments? What would you say? Jesus said, “If you love me, you’ll keep my commandments.” In John 14:23 **Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.**

The Bible says the way that you *show* that you love God is by keeping his commandments. Does that mean you have to be perfect? Not at all. I

was talking to a person about this very verse of scripture here one time. And they said, "I'm not sure whether or not I keep all of God's commandments." And I said, "I'm *sure* that I don't keep all God's commandments. I failed in so many of them!"

But let me tell you what this is talking about. That word, "keep/obey" was a nautical term that was used by sailors who followed a star to keep their course. They would steer by that star. God's commandments to us as believers are to steer us; they are there to guide us. And we may get off course, but we always come back.

Now let me tell you the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, they had to obey God's commands out of duty. It was something they had to do. But New Testament Christians obey God's commands out of desire. We want to obey. It's not that we feel the duty, the obligation. We want to do it. A lady was once typing a manuscript for an author. He was paying her by the hour to type this manuscript for him. And he kept bringing her different, additional pages to type and working with her for revisions. It was a job for her, and it kept her busy. Over time, they developed a relationship and fell in love. Finally, they got married. Then what used to be a job to her now became a joy for her! What used to be a duty typing his manuscript now became a delight because she fell in love with the person for whom she was working! When you love God, keeping His commandments is an act of love instead of duty.

3. A true Believer lives a life of God's conquest. John uses the word "conquer" three times. He writes, "**This is the victory that has overcome the world: even our faith.**" It's faith – not fighting. I want to remind you that we are involved in a conflict. It's not a conflict between The U.S. and Russia. It's not against political parties, or vaxers against anti-vaxers. This is spiritual warfare. Part of this conflict is against our current world's efforts to destroy our religious freedom and silence the truth of the Gospel. We aren't fighting against flesh and blood but against the world's effort to attack the gospel and take away our religious freedom.

But lest you think that this fight is too close to call, you're wrong. We may lose a few battles, but the outcome of the war is predetermined.

We've already won the victory. We aren't fighting FOR victory; we're fighting FROM victory. Satan and all his forces were defeated at the cross.

I was reading a book by Paul Bilheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, and I love the way he describes our victory: **“This world gathered its forces. It moved its heavy artillery and began to blast the Lord Jesus Christ. It used all the power and the savage cruelty of the Roman Empire. Finally, the world put Jesus on a cross and unleashed its mightiest weapon: the very power of death. The cannon of death exploded at point-blank range. But when the smoke cleared and the dust settled, there was an empty tomb and the Lord Jesus Christ with the keys of death and hell and the grave ascending to the Father, leaving captivity captive. That is our victory.”**

The devil knows he's defeated so he's just like a bully who trying to cause harm before he goes to jail. Have you ever had problems with a bully? I remember being in the first grade, there was a bully who would taunt me and push me down. I told my sister, Judy, who was three years older than me. She was always big for her age and she was tough. She said, “Don't worry, just stick with me.” So I remember walking into school the next day and seeing that bully. He looked at me and looked at my sister. She gave him a look that said, “Go ahead. Make my day.” And I stuck out my tongue at him. And that was the last time I had trouble with him.

You don't have to face the devil in your own strength. The Bible says to resist the devil and he will flee from you. You resist him in the power of Jesus Christ. And when you're walking in the Spirit, walking with Christ, you can look at the devil and stick your tongue out and say, “I have already won the victory.”

As Believers we have all the resources we need to conquer the devil and his demons. There's a powerful verse in Revelation that speaks about how the Tribulation Saints will have victory over the devil. It's the same way we have victory. Revelation 12:11 says: **“They conquered him (the devil) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; for they did not love their lives to the point of death.”** Here are our three resources to have victory over the devil.

(1) We overcome by our spiritual re-birth. That's the word of their testimony. You have no testimony until you have assurance that you have been born of the Spirit. In John 8 Jesus spoke of the Pharisees and said, "You are of your father the devil and the works of your father you do." There are two fathers and two families. When we are born again into the family of God you receive a new nature and a new power. Everyone knows they have been born physically. They even celebrate it once a year. But some people aren't as certain about their spiritual birth. If you ask a person if they have been born again, they may say, "I hope so." Or "I think so." But according to 1 John you can say, "I know so!" If you took a red pen and circled the word "know" every time it appears in 1 John you'd have 40 circles in five chapters. You'd have so many red circles it would look like that part of your Bible had measles. God doesn't want you to be a doubting believer. You can be a shouting believer. One of your greatest weapons in spiritual warfare is the word of your testimony.

(2) We overcome with our undying belief. The Bible said that they did not love their lives even unto death. This speaks of a time in the future when tribulation saints were being killed for their faith – but their faith was so strong, that they wouldn't deny Jesus. Our text says that "this is the victory that overcomes the world – even our faith." Faith is the lifestyle of an overcomer. You don't conquer the world by TRYING but by TRUSTING. Faith is not simply believing what God says. It is acting on what God says.

The world is always offering to entice us away from faith. In 1 John 2 we learned that we aren't to love the world or the things of the world. Then it lists the things of the world: the lusts of the flesh; the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

I love the little chorus I've been singing for years: **"Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim; in the light of his glory and grace."**

When you are focused on Jesus, the things of the world lose their appeal. Last Friday night Cindy and I cooked out. I grilled a couple of small tenderloins, and she prepared a Caesar Salad and baked potatoes. We really enjoyed that meal. So what if someone had come up to me

afterwards and offered me a plate of old, moldy, breadcrumbs? I would say, “No thanks, I’m satisfied.

That’s what the world offers. But when you load up on Jesus, nothing this world has to offer has any appeal to you. Do you have that kind of faith?

(3) We overcome through His redeeming blood. Revelation 12;11 says, **“They overcame the devil by the blood of the lamb.”** The Apostle John wrote: **“He is the one who came by water and blood.”**

Not by water only but by water and blood. When Jesus was talking to Nicodemus in John 3, He compared being born physically as being born of water. But what does it mean when it says that Jesus came by blood? It was the blood of Jesus that took away our sin.

Over the past fourteen months, we’ve all become a little more knowledgeable about something in our blood called antibodies. Cindy and I had mild cases of Covid last Thanksgiving, and as a result, our bodies created natural antibodies. When a bad cell – an antigen - gets into the blood stream, this antibody goes up to it and says, “You’re not supposed to be here, so I’m taking you out.” The antibody literally binds with it and neutralizes the harmful effects of the antigen.

The Bible says “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s son purifies us from all unrighteousness.” The blood of Jesus provides us with the spiritual antibodies to overcome the deadly effects of the sin of the flesh, the attractions of the world, and the temptation of the devil. We are victorious over the world the flesh and the devil.

CONCLUSION: One of the most prominent names in Sports apparel is Nike. Chances are most of you have some Nike gear. In 1989 even though Nike sponsored Michael Jordan and his Nike Air Jordan shoes, they still trailed Reebok in sales. But that all changed with Bo Jackson in 1989. The Auburn University star was playing major league baseball and for the NFL. Nike had spent millions of dollars on a new ad campaign called “Bo Knows.” It was the 1989 Major League Baseball All Star Game at Angels Stadium in Anaheim. Bo Jackson was the lead-off hitter for the American League. Bo swung and hit a fast-ball and it was a line-drive home run that was still rising when it hit the center field bleachers 440 feet away. It just so happened after that inning, Nike

showed their first Bo Knows commercial. And the rest is history. Since that commercial until today, Nike has been the global leader in active sportswear. Did you know Nike is a word from the Bible? It's the word that John used three times in verses 4 and 5. It's the Greek word Nike which means "conquer."

What are the birthmarks of a believer? We love God's children. We long for God's commandments. And we live in God's victory. The Bible says that we aren't just conquerors – Nike – we are MORE than conquerors. It's a combination of two words you know. Have you ever taken an Uber? The Bible says in Romans 8:36 that we are UBER NIKE! We are more than conquerors.

The Bible says in Romans 8: **"Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'Because of you we are being put to death all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

Have you come to a place in your life where you know that you have eternal life and that you will go to Heaven when you die? If you don't know, you can make that certain today.