

CHRISTIANITY (*defined*)
A Study of 1 John
“Do you KNOW that you KNOW Jesus?”
1 John 2:3-11

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INTRODUCTION: What you don't know CAN hurt you. Florida State Football Coach, Bobby Bowden visited our church in Gardendale several times because he was recruiting one of our students Peter Tom Willis. I often asked coach Bowden to speak on Sunday mornings. He loved the Lord and had a great sense of humor. He loved to tell the funny story about a High School football coach whose team was losing by six points and only a little time was left in the game. The other team had the ball and were running out the clock. Suddenly his team intercepted a pass and ran it down to the five-yard line.

The coach called 36 sweep – but they were stopped. Next he called 39 sweep to the other side -same result. On third down he called a quarterback keeper up the middle. They didn't score. The coach was so frustrated that he threw down his clipboard and turned his back – he didn't even call a play. Then he heard the crowd roar and his team had scored a touchdown.

The coach ran on the field and grabbed the QB and said, “What play did you call?”

The quarterback said, “I really didn't know what play to call, but I looked up in the huddle and I saw number 10 and then next to him was number 13. So I added 10 and 13 together, so I called 24 cross trap – and it worked! The coach said, “Son, 10 + 13 doesn't equal 24, it adds up to 23!” **The quarterback said, “Gosh, coach, if I was as smart as you I guess we wouldn't have won the game.”**

What you don't know can really hurt you – especially when it comes to knowing Jesus. If I were to ask you, “Do you know Jesus Christ?” what would you say? Sometimes people say to me, “Well, I think so.” Or “I hope so.” But the Bible says it is possible to know for sure that you know Christ. If you have a think-so salvation or a hope-so salvation, I hope that you can come to the point where you have a know-so

salvation. That's the theme of the book of 1 John. In fact, 40 times in five chapters we find the word "Know." There are about 100 verses in 1 John, and almost every fourth verse contains the word "know." Let's read our passage starting in 1 John 2:3 and see if you can notice the five times the word "know" appears.

1 John 2:3-11: This is how we KNOW that we KNOW him: if we keep his commands. The one who says, "I have come to KNOW him," and yet doesn't keep his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, truly in him the love of God is made complete. This is how we KNOW we are in him: The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked.

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old command that you have had from the beginning. The old command is the word you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. The one who says he is in the light but hates his brother or sister is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother or sister remains in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother or sister is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and doesn't KNOW where he's going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

We live in a world where truth has been hijacked. Just because someone says something or writes it on a social media post doesn't mean it is true. The same is true for the Christian life. I can say, "I'm a tree. I'm a tree." But that doesn't make me tree. I could even dress up in a tree costume and say, "See, I'm a tree." But I'm still not a tree – I don't have the inner nature of a tree.

In the same way a person can say, "I'm a Christian. I'm a Christian." They can even know the Christian jargon. In Matthew 7 Jesus described some religious people who said, "Lord, Lord" to Him, but He sent them away and said, "I never KNEW you." So how do you know if you know Jesus. There are three simple tests in this passage of scripture. Examine yourself and see if you pass these tests.

1. THE COMMANDMENT TEST (3-5) John writes in verse 3: **“This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands.”** So

how well you measure up by keeping the commands of Jesus? Now if you feel like a failure, it’s because nobody is perfect. Only one person has ever walked on this planet who perfectly kept all the commands of God all the time – and His name is Jesus. But when you become a true Child of God a couple of important things happen:

(1) God gives you a NEW DESIRE. When you come to Christ, God places in your heart a new desire obey him. As I mentioned, nobody obeys all of God’s commands all the time. But the question is: DO YOU WANT TO? Is it your heart-felt desire to obey God every day in every way?

I’ve mentioned before that there are 613 specific written commandments in the Old Testament – but let’s forget those for a moment – because we’re aren’t under the Law we’re under grace. There are only two commandments in the New Testament. Jesus said, “Love God with everything you’ve got; and love your neighbor like yourself.” That’s easier to remember than 613 trivial commandments. But the pages of the New Testament are filled with admonitions and directions that might be called commands. Someone has counted them and have discovered that there are 1050 New Testament Commands. 73 of them begin with the word “Be.” For instance the New Testament says: BE thankful; BE tenderhearted one to another; BE patient; BE of good cheer: BE transformed; Be baptized; Be angry and sin not; Be filled with the Holy Spirit; BE of one accord: BE doers of the Word.” That’s just ten -there’s a swarm of another 63 “Be’s” in the New Testament. So what about those 1050 New Testament commands. How many of you kept every one of them perfectly this last week?

That’s not good. But don’t feel condemned. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Let me ask you another question. How many of you can honestly say that is your DESIRE to obey the Lord 100% of the time? You are the kind of people for whom God is searching. Not perfect people – but people whose hearts are perfectly committed to God.

(2) God gives us a New Devotion. I mentioned last week that before you came to faith in Christ, you were running from God and running toward sin. But when you repent, it means that you turn around. I heard someone say recently, “I’m going to change my life, I’m going to do make a 360-degree turn.” They were confused because 360 degrees is a full turn and you end up going in the same direction. When you repent, you do a 180 degree turn and your life is going in a different direction. The World, the Flesh, and the devil are no longer your master. Jesus is your new Lord – your master. When the heavenly master says, “Do this, you say, “Yes sir!” You don’t obey Him because you fear His punishment; you obey Him because you love Him. After the Apostle Paul started following Jesus he used a certain title to describe him in his letters. The title wasn’t was Apostle, or head church planter, or evangelist, or missionary. He identified himself as a *doulos* of Jesus. That was the word for the lowliest slave. He was a slave for Jesus. Before coming to Christ, our desire was to sin. But since we belong to Jesus, our greatest desire is to glorify Jesus by obeying him. As you know the early Christians experienced terrible persecution for their faith. Many of them died while fighting wild animals for blood sport. But they all died with a song of faith on their hearts. I once read about the time when the Roman Emperor Domitian was persecuting Christians. He hated Christians so much and was always looking for new and creative ways to harm them. One day when he was gathered with some of his advisors, they were talking about one particular Christian pastor that they had arrested. And Domitian said, “I know what I’ll do. I’ll take away all his possessions.” And one of his advisors who understood Christianity said, “Well, that won’t do anything to harm him because these Christians have already given up rights to their possessions. They talk about treasures in heaven.” Then the emperor said, “Then I’ll place him in solitary confinement.” And the advisor said that won’t hurt him because he’ll just use that time to pray. “He has a friend who never leaves him or forsakes him,” the advisor explained. “He’ll just spend time with him.”

At that, the emperor announced, "I'll kill him." But the advisor rejected that idea too because, he said, for a Christian death is so much better. He has a home in heaven that he's looking forward to.

By this point, Domitian was out of options and asked, "What then can I do to harm this Christian?"

The advisor leaned in and said, "If you really want to harm him, make him sin."

For a Christian, sin hurts us. It digs at the very core of our being. We aren't perfect, but we have a new desire to live a holy life. It's not possible to be without sin, and we sometimes stumble and fall. But a true Christian has a desire and a devotion to obey our Master.

2. THE CONSISTENCY TEST (6-9) How consistent is your walk with the Lord? In vs. 6 John writes: **This is how we know we are in him: The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked.** John never beats around the bush. He just says that if someone claims to be a Christian but is inconsistent, that guy's lying. He's not telling the truth. Now it's seldom that we walk up to somebody and put our finger in their face and say, "You're lying because you're not living right." But John was not afraid to do that. And he said, "If there's a person who claims to be a Christian, but they don't walk the way Jesus walks, they're inconsistent. And that person doesn't really know Jesus Christ." Do you basically act and talk the same way on Monday through Saturday that you act and talk on Sunday?

You see that was one of my big problems. When I was a teenager on Sunday, I had a Sunday vocabulary. I had a way I acted on Sunday when I was around my Sunday school teacher and my parents when I was at church. But when I went to school during the week, I had a totally different vocabulary. I used awful language, and it wasn't until I was 17 years old that God convicted me of being a hypocrite, and I stopped using profanity. It was as if God was saying to me, "You're not being consistent. Get in or get out." So how do we stay consistent? Consider two important factors:

(1) Our Example. Most successful people had a mentor or a role model that they tried to pattern their life after. I enjoy following the PGA – for the tournaments on television, I always tape it and fast-forward so I can

watch a four-hour broadcast in thirty minutes. A few years ago the younger players on the PGA were interviewed about who they admired most – and the winner was Arnold Palmer. He was a role model because of his willingness to sign autographs as long as fans were there. He always had a kind word to the younger players. I once met Arnold when I was with a group of pastors playing golf at his course at Bay Hill. He came in and shook hands with us. Then he said, “Hats off in the clubhouse gentlemen.” You’ve never seen hats removed as fast as they were that day! We told him we were praying for him and he said he appreciated it very much. And you can tell he was sincere. He is a good role model.

But we have a role model better than Arnold Palmer. His name is Jesus. He is our example to follow. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:21: **“For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”**

Our parents should be our role models, and as parents we should be role models for our children. This doesn’t always work out well. I’ve mentioned by dad several times. He was a man’s man – and outdoors man who love hunting and fishing. He was faithful to take us to church, but he also had a vocabulary that he never used on Sunday.

I think I was probably about 12 years old when I was trying to get a stuck drawer open in the dresser in my bedroom. I had been pulling on it and had gotten frustrated. My mother came in and said, “What’s wrong?” I said, “I can’t get this blankety-blank drawer open.”

Her eyes got as big as baseballs and I heard her walking away yelling, “Orlo! Do you know what your son just said? I wonder where he heard that?”

I got a royal whipping that day, but my dad was much more careful with his words after that. But I can honestly say it was a long time before I ever heard him use curse words again because he knew that I was listening to him. I was wanting to imitate him. Your children are going to imitate you. And as members of God’s family we should use Jesus as our example.

(2) Our Experience. So what should be our experience? The Bible says we are to walk in his steps. That's our daily experience, walking in the steps of Jesus Christ. There's a famous Christian book written by Charles Sheldon entitled *In His Steps*. It's a book about a group of people who decide to get serious about living the Christian life. And they anytime they're confronted with a moral choice, they would ask themselves this question, **"What would Jesus do if he were here?"** In the 90's the WWJD bracelets started showing up. Few people know that the origin of WWJD goes back to that book written in 1896. Professional golfer Payne Stewart had a pretty bad reputation for being a self-centered prima donna for years. Then someone shared the Gospel with him and he became a committed Christian. At that time he started wearing a WWJD bracelet as a witness and as a reminder to him. This photo hangs in my man-cave at home. When Payne won the 1999 U.S. Open he can be seen hugging the trophy and his WWJD bracelet can be seen. Four months later Payne was flying from Orlando to Dallas and the Lear Jet he was in lost pressurization. Everyone inside succumbed to oxygen deprivation, and the jet continued on autopilot until it crashed in South Dakota. But Payne wasn't there. The plane went down, but Payne had already gone up – he was with Jesus, because he can come to know Jesus.

So when you're faced with a choice, a good question to ask yourself is **WHAT WOULD JESUS DO**. However, that's only the starting place. You can take the next step to the Spirit filled life – Christ in you. What would Jesus do if He were here? Praise God, Jesus is here, living and ruling in your heart, and you can have the mind of Christ.

3. THE COMPASSION TEST (10-11). The third way that you can know that you know that you know that you're a Christian is your love for other Christians. **Vs. 11: The one who loves his brother or sister remains in the light.** Now, when we talk about the compassion test, John talks about two kinds of experiences. He talks about walking in the darkness. That's a life filled with hatred. And then he talks about walking in the light. That is a life characterized by a love for one's brothers and sisters

Later in 1 John we come across that word “know” again. 1 John 3:14 says: **“We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters. The one who does not love remains in death.”** Salvation is when you cross a line. It is a line between death to life; from darkness to light; from lostness to salvation. Through the years I’ve heard people say, “Oh, I’ve always been a Christian.” Not according to the Bible. There was a time when you were dead in your trespasses and sins and you heard about the free gift of eternal life. And you placed your faith in Jesus – at that moment you crossed the line. And one of the best ways to know you have crossed that line is if you have agape love for all your brothers and sisters in Christ.

It’s easy to talk about love, but loving is a lot harder. There’s an old two-line poem that says: **“To live above with saints we love; Oh, that will be glory! But to live below with folks we know – now that’s another story!”**

Whenever I talk about loving others, people think, “Well, Pastor, you just don’t know who’s in my family – or in my neighborhood – or in my school. This person is just unlovable. That’s not true. To be unlovable means no one can love them. And there’s not an unlovable person on the face of the earth because Jesus loves everyone. Now they may be unlovely. They may be unlikable, but no one that God ever created is unlovable.

John says that if you say you are in the light, but you hate your brother, you are still in darkness. Hate is a pretty strong word. We have terms today labeled hate-speech and hate-crimes. But hate doesn’t have to be aggressive action. Hate can be passive. Hate is the opposite of love. We call 1 Corinthians 13 the “Love Chapter” because it gives the characteristics of love. Let’s reverse it. As I read through this, ask yourself if this is the attitude you have toward others: ***Hatred is impatient. Hatred is mean. Hatred is jealous. Hatred is boastful. It is proud. Hatred is rude. It is totally selfish. Hatred gets angry easily. Hatred keeps a record of every wrong. Hatred delights in evil and rejoices in lies. Hatred hurts. Hatred mistrusts. Hatred gives up on people. Hatred always fails.***

CONCLUSION: So how do you measure up on the three tests? How about the commandment test? Is it your desire to obey God? How about the consistency test? Does your walk match your talk? How about the compassion test? Do you love your neighbor as yourself? So give yourself a grade.

Do any of you have any recurring dreams? One of mine is that I show up for class in school and I'm not prepared for the test. Something similar to this happened when I was in seminary.

I had a professor in Seminary who taught a course on Christian ethics. It was one of those boring classes, and although he always assigned reading assignments in the text book, he never referred to it. The textbook was thick and hard to digest, but I did try to take notes in class. When it came time for the final exam he said that the test would consist of material from the book and from his lectures. So like everyone else in the class I studied his lecture notes. When we got in class to take the test, I knew I was in trouble. The test consisted of twenty essay questions, all based on information in the book – none of it on his lectures. You could literally hear the moans and complaints as we started taking the test. I hadn't read the book, so I knew I was going to fail the test and get an F. I was pretty angry thinking how unfair it was.

After ten minutes the professor stopped up and said, "How is the test?" All he got was complaints and comments about it being unfair. The professor said, "It's not unfair. I'm the teacher. I created the test. All the questions came from the book you were assigned to read." But I chose to give you this test for one main reason. You all deserve an F. But I have already given each of you an A. You can tear up the tests. And that my young friends, is a lesson about grace." It worked for me, because I left that classroom relieved that I didn't get the grade I deserved – I got the grade I needed.

You don't know that you know Jesus by passing any test, but by accepting His free gift of amazing grace. And if you think you deserved guilt, and got forgiveness instead, that's a great sign that you know that you know Jesus.