

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, May 22, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



THAT YOU MAY KNOW – A STUDY OF 1,2 & 3 JOHN *How to Know that You Know Him - 1 John 2:3-6*

“¹My 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. ²And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. ³Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God ^[a]is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” -1 John 2:1-6 (NKJV)

BACKGROUND AND SETTING FOR 1ST, 2ND, & 3RD JOHN:

(1) AUTHOR = The Apostle John – If you will notice, the letter of 1 John bears no inscription (name, autograph, signature). It doesn't give us a name of an individual in the actual letter itself. For that reason 1 John is often called an “anonymous letter,” but 2 and 3 John do carry an inscription. They are written by someone called “the Elder,” a reference to one of Jesus' closest disciples/apostles who was a part of Jesus inner circle, John. The moniker “Elder” does indicate that John is advanced in years when these letter were written. The language and style of all three letters are identical to each other as well as to John's Gospel, so the traditional view and the most commonly held view is that all three were written by the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20-24). There is no reason to doubt this and early church leaders titled these three little book by John's name.

John actually wrote 5 books in the New Testament... not just these three.

5 Books Written by the Beloved Disciple:

1. The Gospel of John

2. First John
3. Second John
4. Third John
5. The Book of the Revelation

And this I think is significant... all of his books were written later in life and after all the other books in the Bible were recorded.

Here are some facts we know about John:

- **He was the son of Zebedee and Salome (Mt. 4:21; 27:55-56; Mk. 15:40-41)**
- **He and his brother James were fishermen with their father (Mk. 1:19-20)**
- **He and James were called Boanerges or Sons of thunder by Christ because of their fiery behavior at times (Mk. 3:17; cp. Lk. 9:53-54)**
- **He was one of the 3 most intimate disciples of the Lord (Mt. 17:1ff; 26:37)**
- **He was a close associate of Simon Peter... the first ones to arrive at the tomb (Jn. 20:2-8), they suffered imprisonment together after healing a lame man (Acts 3 & 4), and they traveled together to Samaria after the gospel was preached (Acts 8:14-17) not to mention that they were the disciples closest to Jesus**
- **He was one of the pillars (prime leaders) of the church in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9)**
- **From external and extra-biblical sources (history/tradition), like Polycarp, Papias (*pappy-us*), and Justin Martyr (early church fathers) we are told the following about John from his writings – These early church fathers often quoted John and used his writings**
- **Polycarp and Papias were identified as pupils of John - They have writings dated as early as the 2nd century**
- **John was eventually banished to the isle of Patmos by the Roman emperor Domitian, from where he received the visions and wrote The Revelation (cp. Rev. 1:9)**
- **He returned to Ephesus to live out the rest of his life, from where he wrote these three epistles as well as the gospel that bears his name - Archeological remains bear his name in ruins of churches and shrines**
- **John outlived all the other apostles**
- **The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ was written by John probably close to the same time he wrote these small epistles which bear his name.**
- **Remember the book of the Revelation was written about the vision that John saw while banished to the Greek island of Patmos on the Aegean sea.**
- **Tradition says that this was after John had been sentenced to death by martyrdom.**
- **We know little about John's later life and death from the Bible**
- **The most insightful bit of information comes from John 21 when the risen Christ was talking to Peter about Peter's death - After Jesus told Peter that he would not live long Peter asked about John's death. Jesus replied that if John lived until Christ's return, that was not Peter's concern. This was not a promise that John would live until the Lord**

returned, but it does seem to indicate that the Lord knew John would live a long time (John 21:19-23)

- **Tradition holds that John was sentenced to death in a boiling vat of oil, yet he emerged unharmed from the experience**
- **Again tradition tells us that John lived into old age perhaps dying sometime after AD 98... He is thought to have died in Ephesus – But in fact the mystery and unknowns concerning John’s death and what happened to him are not known and are varied...**

God Questions? How Did the Apostle John Die?

We know that the apostle John was exiled for his faith late in life (Revelation 1:9). The Bible does not give us details on how the apostle John died, but tradition gives us a few theories.

The most plausible theory of John’s death states that John was arrested in Ephesus and faced martyrdom when his enemies threw him in a huge basin of boiling oil. However, according to the tradition, John was miraculously delivered from death. The authorities then sentenced John to slave labor in the mines of Patmos. On this island in the southern part of the Aegean Sea, John had a vision of Jesus Christ and wrote the prophetic book of Revelation. The apostle John was later freed, possibly due to old age, and he returned to Ephesus, in what is now Turkey. He died as an old man sometime after AD 98, the only apostle to die peacefully.

Another theory concerning John’s death is associated with a second-century bishop named Papias of Hierapolis. According to one commentary on Papias’s writings, John was killed by a group of Jewish men. However, many historians believe Papias was misquoted or misread and doubt the credibility of this theory.

There is also a legend that says John did not die but rather ascended straight to heaven like Enoch and Elijah. There is no biblical evidence to lend validity to this story.

Ultimately, it is not essential to know how the apostle John died. What is important is the fact that he was not ashamed of Christ (see Luke 9:26) and was willing to die for his faith. A man will not die for something he knows to be a lie. John knew the truth that Jesus had been resurrected, and he was willing to die rather than to renounce his faith in his Savior.

(2) DATE = A.D. 90-95 - As with most books in the Bible, we cannot know for certain when and from where these epistles were penned. As to a date, it is commonly believed to have been written close to the end of the 1st century, with a fairly wide possible time frame... somewhere between 90-95 A.D. Again, we don’t know the exact time or order of the books having been written, but here are some possible dates for John’s writings...

Dates for John’s Biblical Writings:

- 1. The Gospel of John = AD 80 to 98**
- 2. First, Second and Third John = AD 90 to 95**
- 3. The Book of the Revelation = AD 94 to 98**

Of course we know God inspired the Bible and that it was written with His leading, but this may explain why the book of John seems so applicable to the readers of today. **Think of this... John had more time to think about what questions were raised in the 50 or more years after the resurrection of Christ. He knew what doubts had been raised and how to answer the questions before we knew to ask them.**

(3) PLACE OF WRITING = Ephesus – Again, as with most books in the Bible, we cannot know with certainty when and from where these small letters of John were written. Some guesses are better than others, but are still just that guesses. It is believed by most Biblical scholars that John wrote these letters from Ephesus, the place believed to be where he died. It is usually accepted that John wrote them late in his life. Supporters of this point to 2 John 1 and 3 John 1. In both verses, the author calls himself “the elder.” In the original text, there is a definite article before “elder.” Thus, the reference is probably to an older man rather than to one who serves as an overseer in a local church. Also, 1 John 2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 5:21; and 3 John 4 all reference John’s readers as his “little children.” Such a fatherly concern points to John as an older man.

(4) RECIPIENTS = 3 different audiences - The Epistles of John were written to various audiences. They were all written after John was an old man living in Ephesus.

3 Recipients of John’s Letter:

1. **Letter 1 = The Ephesian church (and/or surrounding churches)** - The first epistle was not addressed to anyone in particular, but was written more as a sermon
2. **Letter 2 = Elect lady** - The second was written to an unnamed “elect lady.”
3. **Letter 3 = Gaius** - The third to a man name Gaius. There are three men who bear that name to whom the letter could have been written. There was a Gaius in Macedonia (Acts 19: 29), Corinth (Rom. 16:23), and Derbe (Acts 20:4).

(5) PURPOSE = Multiple purposes - In terms of a positive stated purpose, John actually gives us reasons why he wrote these epistles:

3 Stated Positive Purposes for These Letters:

1. **That your (our) joy may be made complete = 1 John 1:4**
2. **That you may not sin = 1 John 2:1**
3. **That you may know that you have eternal life = 1 John 5:13**

Like the gospel of John, the 3 letters of John were written to supply evidence essential for the building of credible faith.

It also seems evident that John had a purpose to write that was negative in nature.

Three Stated Negative Purposes for These Letters:

1. **He addresses false doctrines that threatened the faith of the early saints = 1 John 2:26).**
2. **There were some who even went out from among the believers = 1 John 2:19 (see also Acts 20:30)**
3. **Of particular concern during these days was the threat of Gnosticism-**
 - The word “Gnosticism” comes from gnosis, which meant “knowledge.”
 - It was “the philosophical result of the blending of the cosmology (*Cosmology deals with the world as the totality of space, time and all phenomena. Historically, it has had quite a broad scope, and in many cases was found in religion*) of Greek thought with the theology of oriental religions, esp. Judaism” (Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 3, p. 648).
 - Gnostics believed they had superior knowledge, and such knowledge was limited only to their select group.
 - According to them, salvation came from knowing theories rather than faith in a Savior.
 - Such a claim obviously puts them at odds with the Lord’s apostles who were promised to be ‘guided into all truth’ (Jn. 16:13).
 - It also contradicts the promise made to those who, upon reading inspired documents, would have apostolic insight into previously hidden mysteries (Eph. 3:3-5).
 - To meet such a threat, the error of gnosticism had to be exposed. Gnostics believed that all matter was evil, and the spirit of man was good.
 - They believed the human body and the spirit within had no effective contact with each other.
 - A redeemed soul inside a sinful body was not affected by immoral behavior.
 - Thus, a person could engage in all sorts of wickedness and it would not endanger the soul.
 - This “theory” puts them in conflict with the Incarnation, or God dwelling in bodily form (cp. Phil. 2:7; Col. 2:9; Jn. 1:14).
 - In terms of everyday application of such a doctrine, usually one of two extremes were practiced: (1) man should abstain from everything that would satisfy the sinful flesh (2) since the soul could not be affected by sinful behavior, man was at liberty to do anything that would satisfy the flesh
 - Generally, gnosticism fell into 2 categories:

2 Categories of Gnosticism:

- (1) **Docetic Gnosticism** – Docetic gnostics (from dokein, ‘to seem’) did not believe that Christ came in bodily form. He only seemed to have been physical; it was “imagined.” If He did come, He was not perfect while in the flesh (cp. 1 Jn. 4:1-3).

- (2) **Cerinthian Gnosticism** - Cerinthian gnostics (named after Cerinthus, an Ephesian gnostic) attempted to make a distinction between the man Jesus and the Christ. They taught that Christ descended upon Jesus at His baptism, and ascended shortly before His crucifixion. Thus it was not Christ who suffered, died, and rose again but Jesus (cp. 1 Jn. 5:6). In order to combat these heresies, John provides proof of the reality of the Lord's fleshly body. He offered testimony using 3 of his 5 human senses (1 Jn. 1:1). Also, to refute the notion that sinful activity can be indulged in without consequences, John pointed out the following: (1) only those who are pure have an eternal hope (1 Jn. 3:3) (2) only those who do righteousness are righteous (1 Jn. 3:7) (3) those who habitually practice sin are of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8)
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ARE YOU REALLY SURE?

Let's play a game "Are You Really Sure?" Below find a list of several statements that you have perhaps heard, maybe said yourself, or that you believe to be true, but how sure are you. Beside each statement place a check in the box that best describes what you think about how sure you are that statement is correct: [] Sure, [] Really Sure, [] Unsure, [] False

(1) ***Carrots improve your vision***

[] Sure [] Really Sure [] Unsure [] False

This is false. The beta-carotene in carrots can convert to vitamin A, which can improve your vision. However, once your body has enough beta-carotene, it no longer makes that conversion, according to *Scientific American*. An apple a day might keep the doctor away, but no amount of carrots is going to prevent your eyesight from worsening.

(2) ***Toads give you warts***

[] Sure [] Really Sure [] Unsure [] False

Toads do not give you warts. This is a false statement. Toads might have a bumpy, wart-like appearance, but that doesn't mean that they're the culprit behind warts. That dubious distinction goes to the human papillomavirus, or HPV, of which there are more than 170 strains. And you'll have to do more than avoid amphibians if you want a nice complexion

(3) ***You only use 10% of your brain***

[] Sure [] Really Sure [] Unsure [] False

The myth that humans only use 10 percent of their brains is just that: a myth. "We use virtually every part of the brain, and... [most of] the brain is active almost all the time," neurologist **Barry Gordon** explained to *Scientific American*. "Let's put it this way: The brain represents three percent of the body's weight and uses 20 percent of the body's energy.

(4) ***Sugar make you hyper***

[] Sure [] Really Sure [] Unsure [] False

This is false. Sorry parents, but when your kids are running around like lunatics at a birthday party, that's because they're excited, not because they're high off of cupcakes and candy. However, just because this is a myth doesn't mean that sugar is good for you. Consuming the substance is still linked to obesity, diabetes, and cavities, just to name a few of the not-so-fun side effects of an unhealthy diet.

(5) ***Coffee stunts your growth***

[] Sure [] Really Sure [] Unsure [] False

Good news, coffee lovers! Though consumption of caffeine *has* been linked to calcium loss, it's not nearly enough to affect your bones. So keep on chugging your cuppa and don't worry about stunting your growth.

(6) ***Swimming after eating gives you cramps***

[] Sure [] Really Sure [] Unsure [] False

Don't worry about going for a dip right after a big lunch. Though our parents used to warn us about the perils of jumping in the pool on a full stomach, there are no known incidents of a person cramping up and

drowning all because they swam right after eating. As **Mark Messick, MD**, a family medicine doctor at Duke Primary Care Timberlyne, explained to [Duke Health](#), while the body needs to divert some blood flow from the limbs to aid in digestion, it's not enough to cause a serious cramp or prevent you from swimming.

- (7) **Napoleon was short** []Sure []Really Sure []Unsure []False
 This is actually not true. Napoleon Bonapart was actually an average height by today's measure and was considered somewhat tall for his day at 5'7" to 5'9". That **Napoleon Bonaparte** is often said to be 5'2" in many historical journals is both true and false. According to [Ripley's Believe It or Not](#), the military leader was measured in French inches, which were longer than English inches. As a result, though Bonaparte is put at five-foot-two, he was actually closer to five feet and seven inches... maybe even as tall as five feet and nine inches.
- (8) **Alcohol kills brain cells** []Sure []Really Sure []Unsure []False
 Even heavy drinkers don't have to worry about killing their brain cells. As [Scientific American](#) explains, alcohol cannot kill brain cells, but it does have the ability to damage dendrites and make it increasingly difficult for the neurons to communicate. That is why someone who has had too much to drink may slur their words and stagger while walking, reflexes may be inhibited and confusion is pronounced.
- (9) **Shaved hair grows back thicker** []Sure []Really Sure []Unsure []False
 You can go ahead and shave your hair without worrying about it thickening. According to the Mayo Clinic, the only thing that shaving *can* do is give hair a blunt tip, which can make it feel coarse or stubbly.
- (10) **Bats are blind** []Sure []Really Sure []Unsure []False
*That is actually false too. Not only are bats not blind, but **Rob Mies**, executive director of the Organization for Bat Conservation, even notes that some of the bigger species "can see three times better than humans." It is simply a common misconception that bats are blind since the creatures prefer to use their enhanced hearing via echo-location to get around.*
- (11) **You shouldn't touch baby birds** []Sure []Really Sure []Unsure []False
Birds don't really have a very powerful sense of smell, and they probably wouldn't be able to tell if a human handled their babies
- (12) **Milk creates mucus** []Sure []Really Sure []Unsure []False
False. If you're sick, milk might make your phlegm seem thicker, but it isn't kicking your body into mucus-making overdrive.
- (13) **Cracking knuckles causes arthritis** []Sure []Really Sure []Unsure []False
False! Don't worry about cracking your knuckles every once in a while. One 2011 analysis published in the Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine found that cracking knuckles did not cause arthritis, so keep calm and carry on!
- (14) **It takes seven years to digest gum** []Sure []Really Sure []Unsure []False
This too is false! Gum actually isn't digestible at all, same as the fiber in popcorn kernels. Like that fiber, it passes through your body without being digested. It not only doesn't take seven years to digest... it never digest, so your body will dispel it just as it does all waste.
- (15) **Sharks don't get cancer** []Sure []Really Sure []Unsure []False
False. Scientists have known for over a century that sharks do get cancer. This is just a myth spread to promote sales of shark cartilage.

Okay, now that all of the thing you thought you knew “for sure” have been shattered I have to ask. Is anything “for sure!” What can we be “sure of”?

There are some things in life that you want to be *really sure* about, because so much rides on the outcome. Your salvation is such an issue. You don't want to take risks about your

eternal destiny. Since the Bible warns that many are deceived about this crucial matter, you especially need to *know* that you know Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.

Last time we were together our text focused on God's abundant grace in forgiving all of our sins. If we sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. But there is always the danger that people will mistakenly "*turn the grace of our God into licentiousness, and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ*" (Jude 4). The true grace of God teaches us "*to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age*" as we saw in our last study in **Titus 2:12**.

★ So after setting forth God's grace, **John goes on to show that those who have truly experienced it will show it by living in obedience to His Word.**

"³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not 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. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." -1 John 2:3-6 (NKJV)

John gives this as the first test of how you can know that you know Jesus Christ:

You can know that you truly know Christ if you walk in obedience to His Word.

Our text teaches us, first, that...

3 Things John is Telling us About Knowing God:

- (1) God wants us to know Him**
- (2) God wants us to know that we know Him**
- (3) The way that we know that we truly have come to know God is by walking in obedience to His Word**

Let's look at each of these as John lays them out in our passage in 1 John 2:3-6...

GOD WANTS US TO KNOW HIM

Think about this... "**Christianity is not just knowing about God or knowing certain doctrines or following certain moral precepts. It is essentially to know God.**" Now I want you to think about this... what is the difference between knowing about God and actually knowing God? What is the difference?

Jesus said in John 17:3, *“³And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”* ***What is He telling us? What does He mean... “that they may know You? Really knowing Him give you eternal life! How?”***

Again... there is a big difference between knowing about God and knowing God. In the Bible, knowing God means two things...

2 Things Knowing God Means;

- (1) **It means you have an accurate knowledge about God** - What does it mean to have an “accurate knowledge of God”? How do you get an “accurate knowledge of God”? There is really only one way... through God’s Word. You spend time in an around the Word of God. You read it, study it, sit under the teaching and preaching of it.
- (2) **It means that you have a personal relationship with Him built upon that accurate knowledge** – In other words you have to know Him in an intimate, personal relationship, through Jesus Christ. We are talking about salvation, coming into relationship with God through Christ.

Sometimes we hear people say things like:

- “I like to think God is like this...”
- “I’ve always believed God is like that...”

What is wrong with these statements?

The problem is the Bible alone is the only sufficient and accurate source of who God is, what He is like, and how to know Him personally. So, we all need to stop thinking and guessing about who God is and what He is like. We need to be changed in our thinking about God by the Bible’s teaching about Him.

How may we know God?:

- (1) **The Bible teaches that everyone knows that there is a God, even if they are an atheist or agnostic** - Paul said so in Romans 1:18-20, *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”* Sinful men suppress the fact that God made them and all things, but deep down they all know that there is a God because God made them in His image and because all of creation cries out of its Creator.

That is why we have a conscience and sense that there is “something more” to this life than just living and dying. As C.S. Lewis said, *“If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.”*

We know that there is “something missing.” That is God’s self-testimony to the deepest part of man’s soul. Yet men try suppress the truth in unrighteousness because they know that if there is a true God, they will have to live according to His will, not their own. Here is the root of sin that blinds men to the knowledge of God: rebellion.

- (2) **The Bible teaches that the only way for sinners to know God personally is through the person, words, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ** - John 17:3 says, *“³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”* In the mystery of the Trinity, to have eternal life is to know God the Father personally as the only true God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom He sent to reveal Himself to man. **Jesus Himself is the proof that there is a God and how to know Him truly.** Many times in the Bible, God told Israel that He would deliver them from Egypt, take them to the promised land, deliver them from their enemies, etc., in order that they and the nations around them would know that He is the only true God. Yet, in all of His revelation of Himself through His works, still they did not “know the Lord” personally and submit to living His way. They did not unite what they saw and heard to personal faith in God. They knew things about God, but they did not know Him personally. Hebrews 4:2 says, *“For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.”* To know God personally is to be restored to His love and mercy through the person and work of Jesus Christ, to repent of sin against God and His good law, to believe in His Son’s death for atonement and His resurrection for eternal life, to submit your life and will to worship and obey the only true God. This is how God restores us to His favor and salvation. This is how we come to a personal relationship with the only true God. This is how we come to know Him as our God. Yet, even after coming to Him for salvation, we must continue to grow in our knowledge of God and what He is like and what it means to live in personal fellowship with Him.
- (3) **To know God in a living relationship means that we must believe who He is and the truths He has revealed about Himself in the Bible alone** - For example, the Bible teaches that God is all-knowing about everything all the time. King David prayed in Psalm 139:1-4, *“O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all.”* To live knowing God by faith is to believe that He knows you and all things all the time, that He knows the end from the beginning, that He knows every thought and step in your life, that His full attention is upon your life and thoughts all the time as your Heavenly Father, that the Lord Jesus Christ is always interceding with the Father for your care and needs, every single moment of every single day. This is what makes prayer such a wonderful gift. God is always knowing you! The redeemed believer lives by faith, knowing that God knows

him/her, even when you may not feel it, even if God feels far away. Further, the Bible teaches that God is Almighty who causes all things in existence to work together for good to those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). To live a life knowing God means that you believe this about Him, even if you cannot fully understand how He is working all things together for good. As we believe this about Him, we experience the personal comfort of knowing His love and wise care of our lives. For God is love in all He does for His people, all the time. It is one thing to know *about* God, but it is another thing to *know God Himself*. Faith in the God of the Bible as He has revealed Himself goes beyond just knowing about Him and lives knowing Him to be faithful and true to all those who have come to Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what it means to live by faith, knowing God, no matter how you may feel on a certain day.

Christianity at its heart is, knowing God personally through Jesus Christ, who revealed God to us. If you do not know Him, you are not a Christian, no matter how correct your doctrine or how faithful your church attendance. You may have been raised in the church and you may always have adhered to Christian morality. But if you do not know God personally, you are not saved.

READ: Philippians 3:7-11

⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”
– Philippians 3:7-11 (NKJV)

***What do you think Paul meant by “know” Christ... “that I may know Him” (v10)?
How may we “know” Christ in this way?***

The apostle Paul was a rabbinical student steeped in Judaism. He knew the Hebrew Scriptures. He fastidiously kept the Jewish rituals and feasts. As to the righteousness of the Law, he said that he was blameless. But he wrote (Phil. 3:8), “... I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.” Paul knew a lot about God, but he didn’t know God personally until he came to faith in Jesus Christ.

Do you know God personally through Christ? That is foundational. You begin there.

GOD WANTS US TO KNOW THAT WE KNOW HIM

John writes in **verse 3** of our passage... notice it, **“³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.”**

- There is a difference between knowing and knowing that you know.
- It's easy to claim that you know Him, but it's also easy to be mistaken.
- Notice John's words in **verse 4**... these words are very important... look at them (these are powerful words), **“⁴ He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”**
- John mentions (2:4) someone claiming, **“I know Him,”** but John bluntly says that this person **“is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”**
- Since we're talking about eternal destiny, we don't want to be deceived on this crucial matter!

Because this subject is so important, it's not surprising that the enemy of our souls has created some major confusion about it in our day...

Subtle ways the devil perverts the gospel for believers...

7 Distortions of the Gospel by the Enemy that are Commonly Accepted by Christians:

(by Paul David Tripp and Timothy Lane)

- (1) **Formalism: Emphasis on religious actions for salvation** - This gospel distortion has many external signs of cultural Christianity. A typical Christian who has fallen into formalism thinks that their external actions like church attendance and service are enough, and often neglect a real heart change that comes from encountering the living God. These people may find it hard to see their need for God's grace because of their external performance. This view reduces the gospel “to participation in the meetings and ministries of the church.”
- (2) **Legalism: Emphasis on do's and don'ts for salvation** - Legalism seeks to achieve righteousness by following God's commands through a rigid list of do's and don'ts. Tripp and Lane helpfully explain, “Legalism ignores the depth of our inability to earn God's favor. It forgets the need for our hearts to be transformed by God's grace. *Legalism is not just a reduction of the gospel, it is another gospel altogether (see Galatians), where salvation is earned by keeping the rules...*”
- (3) **Mysticism: Emphasis on the emotional and experiential for salvation** - This gospel distortion places more importance on a special spiritual experience or feeling (the subjective) than on true biblical faith that rests on Christ (the objective). Christianity is a religion that touches all of life and the human experience, including emotions and the experiential. The error of mysticism overemphasizes the emotional and experiential dimension of Christianity, forgetting that God works in our lives through the gospel even

when we can't feel it directly. We are to pursue Christ first and the experiences will follow. This view "*reduces the gospel to dynamic emotional and spiritual experiences.*"

- (4) **Activism: Emphasis on activism (social, political, taking a stand) for salvation** - This type of gospel distortion makes a usually important issue (often a social issue such as abortion) an ultimate issue that acts as a litmus test to see whether someone is a 'true Christian.' Tripp and Lane explain that activists overemphasize the evil outside of them to the neglect of the evil that is inside them. This distortion defines Christian maturity as "a willingness to defend right from wrong" and often *reduces the gospel to participation in activism activities.*
- (5) **Biblicism: Emphasis on knowledge and what one knows for salvation** - Biblicism takes something good God has given and twists it into a potentially harmful thing. People who fall into Biblicism often know Scripture and theology well (often at an advanced level), but fail to live out the Christian faith practically. Faith is reduced to a mere knowledge of truth or having "good theology"; forgetting vital elements of faith like living with grace and in submission to Christ. Tripp comments, "[The Biblicist] has invested a great deal of time and energy mastering the Word, but he does not allow the Word to master him. In summary, Biblicism *reduces the gospel to a mastery of biblical content and theology.*" This is why one can be knowledgeable and even a good teacher and educator of Biblical truth and still not be a Christian necessarily.
- (6) **Psychologism (Psychology - ism): Emphasis on self-help and victimhood as means of salvation** - This view often regards Christianity primarily as a self-help philosophy of dealing with emotional hurts like neglect and rejection instead of God graciously dealing with humanity's sin problem and allowing us to worship Him through a personal relationship with Christ. The worst sin in this view is the sin of others, and often the self is the mere victim of sin. Tripp explains, "Whenever you view the sin of another against you as a greater problem than your own sin, you will tend to seek Christ as your therapist more than you seek him as your Savior. Christianity becomes more a pursuit of healing than a pursuit of godliness. *The gospel is reduced to the healing of emotional needs.*"
- (7) **Socialism: Emphasis on community of the church as a means of salvation** - This view emphasizes social relationships within a church and often caters to people who find a new and special social acceptance in a church group. In this since the church become a "social club" and is considered a means of one's salvation in in a purely self-improvement sense. A strong community of Christ-followers is a special thing, but it can easily turn into a social club that emphasizes relationships over growing in Christ. When the community begins to change or staple programs and retreats get cut, the Christian who falls into "socialism" might be disillusioned in his faith and even stop attending church altogether. For this person, "the grace of friendship replaced Christ as the thing that gave him identity, purpose, and hope. *The gospel had been reduced to a network of fulfilling Christian relationships.*" Often, these distortions begin with good intentions, but are hijacked by our flesh and transformed into destructive idols. We need to fight against these distortions of the gospel that can so easily sneak into our lives. The gospel is not about merely knowing all the facts, merely having a lot of Christian friends,

or merely doing the right things on the outside; the gospel is about the saving work of Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection that reconciles us to God through faith in Christ.

There are many evangelicals (including the Greek professor under whom I first studied 1 John) who teach that if a person professes faith in Christ, he is saved eternally and should be assured of his salvation, even if his subsequent life demonstrates no fruit to back up his claim. They argue that if faith must be validated by any evidence, then it is not faith alone that saves.

The popular Four Spiritual Laws booklet also promotes the idea of giving immediate assurance of salvation to a person who prays to receive Christ. It uses 1 John 5:13, *“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”*

- The logic goes, “You just prayed to receive Jesus, indicating that you believe in Him.
- Therefore, you should know that you have eternal life and that nothing can ever take it away from you.”
- But the booklet ignores that “these things” refers to all that John has written, which includes three tests of genuine faith: obedience, love, and sound doctrine.
- That view of instant assurance based on a person’s profession of faith is foreign to what most of the godly men in church history have taught.
- I would argue that it is foreign to First John, Hebrews, James, and many other Scriptures.

In the parable of the sower, those represented by the rocky soil that received the word with joy certainly would have claimed to believe. The same would be true of the thorny soil. But only the fourth type, the good soil, brought forth fruit with perseverance (Luke 8:5-15). That parable shows that if a person *truly* believes, he will endure trials and root out the weeds of the world. But it takes some time to determine this. How can we know if a recent profession of faith is genuine, saving faith? Look at the fruit that comes from it. But fruit takes time to grow.

In 2 Peter 1:10, the apostle exhorts us to *“be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; ...”* Why would anyone need to be diligent to make certain about this, if assurance is something that accompanies initial faith? Peter indicates that making certain about our calling and election is somewhat tied to our deeds subsequent to initial faith. He adds (2 Pet. 1:10-11), “for as long as you practice these things [the qualities that he has just listed], you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.”

So God wants us not only to know Him through faith in Jesus Christ, but also to know that we know Him. But as many Scriptures indicate, this assurance is linked to how we live subsequent to our profession of faith. John shows...

THE WAY THAT WE KNOW THAT WE TRULY HAVE COME TO KNOW GOD IS BY WALKING IN OBEDIENCE TO HIS WORD

Let's go back to our text one more time and look at what John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes here in 1 John 2:3-6, "³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not 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. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

John uses three somewhat overlapping ideas here, but there seems to be a progression in them.

3 Overlapping Ideas of 1 John 2:3-6:

(1) Keeping God's commandments is evidence that we have come to know Him (1 John 2:3-4) - He writes in verse 3, "³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." Verse 4 then states the other side, exposing the false claims of the heretics, "⁴ He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Notice that John doesn't use diplomatic, nuanced language that leaves you thinking, "I wonder what he meant?" What part of **liar** don't you and I understand? We need to be careful, though, not to reverse the order of Scripture. We are not saved by keeping God's commandments. We are saved by faith alone, but genuine saving faith *necessarily* results in a life of obedience to Jesus Christ.

As **John Calvin** puts it (*Calvin's Commentaries* [Baker], on 1 John 2:3, p. 174), "**The knowledge of God is efficacious.**" The word "efficacious" is a good word... do you know what it means? It means effective, useful, worthwhile, valuable. He means that knowing God *necessarily* has great value and worth in your life... namely it changes your heart and life.

READ: John 14:15-24

Behind our text in John's mind were Jesus' words in the Upper Room. Jesus said (John 14:15), "*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.*" He added (14:21), "*He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.*" If we missed it, He repeats (14:23-24), "*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.*" Just a few sentences later, Jesus emphasized (John 15:10),

“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.” We could spend several messages on these important words of Jesus, but note a few things.

Some observations:

1. **First, the fact that John, as an old man, is still reciting these words of Jesus that he had heard about sixty years before should teach us something! He couldn’t shake from his life the words of Jesus -** Jesus’ teaching is not something to read and forget as you go your way. His teaching should burn into our very existence, so that it shapes how we think and how we live for the rest of our lives. As Jesus stated, His words were not merely His words, but the words of the Father who sent Him. If you are not thoroughly familiar with Jesus’ teaching, it will not affect your life. You will not obey His words if you do not know them. Since Jesus’ words are God’s words, we must study and know them so that they impact everything we do.
 2. **Second, note that Jesus doesn’t give out helpful hints for happy living -** He isn’t a therapist in the sky, suggesting that you may want to try His techniques to see if they work for you. He issues commandments! This means that you are not free to pick and choose the commands of Jesus that grab you or fit your agenda. He is the Lord, who speaks the words of God. His commandments are authoritative.
 3. **Third, to keep His commandments implies diligence and effort -** The word “keep” was used of a sentry walking his post. It implies that the enemy is attempting to invade and dominate your life with temptations that will destroy you. To resist him, you must be vigilant so as to obey the commandments that Jesus has given. A faithful sentry is not laid back. He is alert and diligent.
 4. **A fourth observation is that knowing God and keeping His commandments are inextricably linked.** John states that keeping His commandments is one way that we know that we know Him. Jesus said that if anyone keeps His commandments, He and the Father will love him and Jesus will disclose Himself to that person. We often hear about God’s unconditional love, and there is a sense in which it is so. But Jesus points to a conditional aspect of His love, namely, that it hinges on having and keeping His commandments. To the extent that you obey Jesus (and to that extent *only*) will you experience His love and to that extent only will you truly know Him.
- (2) **Keeping God’s Word shows that the love of God has been perfected in us (1 John 2:5a) –** Notice **verse 5** of our passage, *“⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.”* The first part of **verse 5** repeats what John has just said, but it also seems to go a bit farther. John moves from *knowing* God to the *love* of God, and from keeping His *commandments* to keeping His *word*, which seems to be broader. The Bible contains many specific commandments about how we should live, but it also includes many general principles that relate to how you think, to your motives, and to your goals. So we should obey all of God’s Word. The phrase, “the love of God,” is ambiguous. It may mean “God’s love for us,” or, “our love

for God.” Or, it may refer to God-like or divine love. Scholars are divided between the first two options, and it’s hard to decide. But perhaps it does not really matter, in that if God’s love for us is perfected in us, we will also love God. And, no one can really love God without first experiencing His love. So the two concepts are intertwined. “Perfected in us” means, “brought to maturity.” It means that the love of God has “fulfilled its mission,” or “has reached its goal” when it is consummated in our obedience (Robert Law, *The Tests of Life* [Baker], p. 213). John Calvin understands the phrase to refer primarily to our love for God. He points out that Moses said the same thing (Deut. 10:12-13), “Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the Lord’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?” Calvin says (p. 176) that “the law, which is spiritual, does not command only external works, but enjoins this especially, to love God with the whole heart.” Thus our obedience shows that we truly love God and have been laid hold of by His love.

(3) Walking as Jesus walked shows that we abide in Him (1 John 2:5b-6) – Look again at verses 5-6, “⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” Although some take the last phrase of verse 5 to point back, I understand it to point forward to verse 6... “By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” John equates being “in Him” with “abiding in Him.”

“Abiding” is John’s term for fellowship or a close, intimate relationship. As with the phrases, “keeping His commandments” and “the love of God,” so also the term “abiding” goes back to the Upper Room Discourse, to Jesus’ words about the vine and the branches. There Jesus said (John 15:4), “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.”

Dr. James Rosscup devotes an entire book to the theme of abiding in Christ as found in John 15. He sums up the concept of abiding in three ways (*Abiding in Christ* [Zondervan], p. 116, italics his): “Abiding involves a person’s relating himself to Christ the Vine, to His Person and His purpose; rejecting attitudes, words, actions, or interests which Christ’s Word reveals He cannot share; and receiving the quality-essence of Christ’s imparted life for authentic fulfillment.”

In our text, John says that if we are abiding in Christ, we will walk as He walked. This means that He is our supreme example for living. Jesus showed us how we should live in total dependence on the Father and in complete submission to His will, no matter how difficult. Jesus claimed (John 5:19), “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of

Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.” He also said (John 8:29), “...for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” While no one can make similar claims, everyone who claims to abide in Christ should have the same focus and direction, not to act in independence from God, but in total dependence on Him. We should not live to please ourselves apart from God, but to do the things that are pleasing to Him.

Also, John’s words show us that the Christian life is a *walk*. That is a helpful metaphor that the apostle Paul uses often (Eph. 2:10; 4:1, 17; 5:1, 8, 15; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12). Walking is not as spectacular or swift as running, leaping, or flying, but it is a steady, sure movement in one direction. It implies progress toward a destination or goal. A walk is made up of many specific steps, but it points to the overall tenor or general quality of a life, not to any one step.

To walk as Jesus walked means that our lives should be characterized by daily dependence on God, submission to Him, and obedience to His will. Our overall aim in life will be to seek first His kingdom and righteousness. We will seek to please Him by our thoughts, words, and deeds. While we will never perfectly walk as Jesus walked, it should be our constant aim and effort to do so.

CONCLUSION

Thus, John is saying that you can know that you truly know Christ if you walk in obedience to His Word.

But someone may say, “As far as I know, I do believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I seek to obey Him. But, I often fall short. Since I can never walk perfectly in this life, how can I have complete assurance that I truly know Him?”

Calvin, who was not only a theologian, but also a pastor, answers this in a couple of ways. He points out that there is not anyone in human history, except for Jesus Christ, who has perfectly kept God’s commandments. If perfect obedience were the requirement, then no one could ever confidently say, “I know Him.” So Calvin says that keeping His commandments refers to “such as strive, according to the capacity of human infirmity, to form their life in conformity to the will of God. For whenever Scripture speaks of the righteousness of the faithful, it does not exclude the remission of sins, but on the contrary, begins with it” (p. 175).

Regarding the fact that no one loves God perfectly, Calvin replies, “that it is sufficient, provided every one aspired to this perfection according to the measure of grace given unto him. In the meantime, the definition is, that the perfect love of God is the complete keeping of his law. To make progress in this as in knowledge, is what we ought to do” (p. 176).

So the issue is, purpose, direction, and focus. If the purpose and direction of your life is to please God by obedience to His commands, you can know that you know Him. It does not mean that you never fail, but that when you do, you get up and keep walking in obedience, seeking to please God with all your life.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones sums up these verses (*Walking With God* [Crossway Books], p. 53): “If you have the life, it is bound to show itself, and if it does not, then you have not the life.... You cannot be receiving the life of Christ without becoming like Him. You cannot walk with God without keeping His commandments. You cannot know God without immediately, automatically loving Him. Love always manifests itself by doing what the object of its love desires.”

3 Questions to Ask Yourself So You May Know that You Know:

- (1) “**Do I know Christ?**” - Have you trusted in Him as the propitiation for your sins? Have you invited Him in and made Him your Lord and Savior?
- (2) “**Do I know that I know Him?**” – If so, how?
- (3) “**Do I obey His Word and seek to walk as Jesus walked?**” - If that is the direction and focus of your life, then you can know that you know Him.

Application Questions

1. Why is assurance of salvation important? What practical benefits are there if you have it? What disadvantages if you don't?
2. Assurance of salvation is not something to share immediately with a new convert. Agree/Disagree? Give biblical support.
3. Some say that if assurance depends on anything in us (other than faith), we fall into works-salvation. Agree/Disagree?
4. Some say that if you emphasize obedience to God's commandments you fall into legalism? Agree/Disagree?