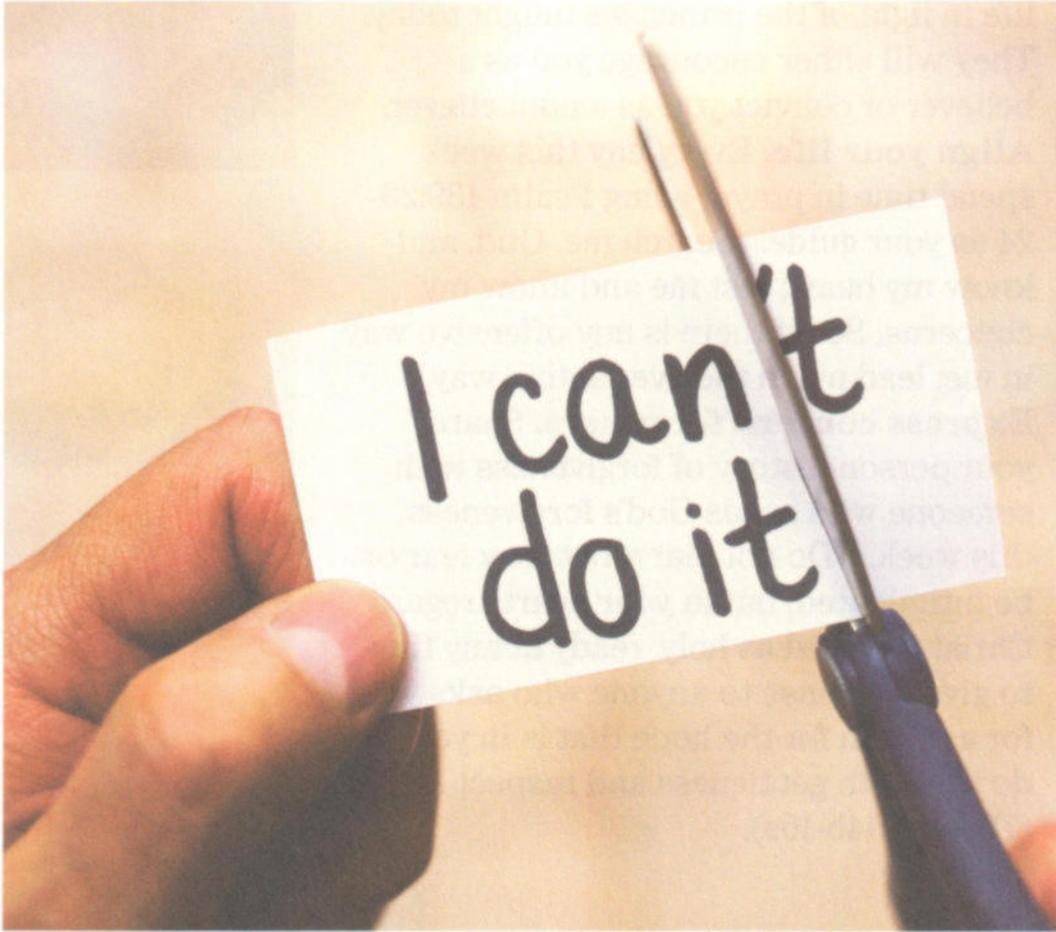


SESSION 2

Sure of a Relationship



**QUESTION 1:**

*Who's the most confident person you know?*

## THE POINT

My relationship with God is reflected in how I live.

## THE PASSAGES

1 John 2:3-11,15-17

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Life has a way of surprising us and throwing us into a sea of unknowns. We saw this in early 2020 when a virus from the other side of the globe came crashing down on us.

- ▶ One day parents were dropping their kids off at school. The next day, the schools were closed indefinitely.
- ▶ One day people had steady, stable jobs. The next day, many businesses had to shut their doors indefinitely. For many, not working meant not getting paid. Even worse, many lost their jobs permanently.
- ▶ One day people were free to move about, but suddenly they were cautioned to stay in for fear of catching or spreading the COVID-19 virus.

When life is full of unknowns, confidence and assurance can disappear. In their place come fear and doubt.

We all need confidence and assurance, and when it comes to living the Christian life, confidence and assurance become critical. David Allen said trying to live the Christian life without either is “like driving a car with the brakes on.”<sup>1</sup> These passages show us we can take our foot off the brakes!

## 1 John 2:3-6

**3 This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands.**

**4 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.**

**5 But whoever keeps his word, truly in him the love of God is made complete. This is how we know we are in him:**

**6 The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked.**

**KEY WORD:** **Remains** (v. 6)—This refers to remaining in God or Christ and reveals a permanent relationship. We cannot claim to abide in Christ unless we live like Him.

John used the word know four times in this passage. John wrote that Christians can know with certainty they are in a relationship with God. Assurance of salvation is based on the right conditions. Living in Oklahoma, we often hear that weather conditions are right for a tornado. The right conditions for a tornado result from instability in the atmosphere. When warm, humid conditions in the lower atmosphere make contact with colder conditions in the upper atmosphere, an intense spinning occurs which subsequently produces a tornado.

The right conditions for a Christian to have assurance of a relationship with God result from walking in obedience to God’s commands. Obedience happens as we keep his word. This phrase stresses the importance of consistent, continual compliance with the Word of God. We still will falter on occasion, but all true Christians seek to live their lives in obedience to God’s commands.

Obedience is the natural outcome of the new birth. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commands” (John 14:15). We demonstrate our love for Jesus through our obedience. Therefore, if we lack assurance of salvation, all we need to do is to look at the pattern of obedience in our lives. Obedience to God’s commands

## DIGGING DEEPER

### INTRODUCING 1 JOHN

For an overview of 1 John, refer to the article on pages 34-37. Note the

author's reference to these key terms found throughout 1 John: *know*, *love*, and *remain* (or *abide*) which are all used in this passage.

doesn't save us; we are saved by grace through our faith in Jesus, the One who kept the law perfectly. Now we obey because we have that relationship. Our obedience reflects our relationship with Christ.

However, for those who don't obey, John had some harsh words: "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." It's like the guy who claims to be a football player but never shows up to practice or for the game. His claim is not backed up by reality. Unfortunately, this is the same for many so-called Christians today. They profess Christ without any life change whatsoever. Is this real Christianity? Absolutely not. No Christian obeys perfectly, but every genuine believer has a desire to obey God, and that desire is substantiated by practice. The proof of our love for God is our loyalty and obedience to Him.

True love for God is reflected through gracious obedience to His commands. Throughout John's writing, he reminded us of the call to love others (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-11). Let's put this together. God loves us. We love Him in return (4:19) and we show that love by obeying His command to love one another. God's love has worked on us and in us. In this way "the love of God is made complete," meaning it is maturing us and pointing to our conversion and transformation.

### QUESTION 2:

***What do these verses teach us about God's commands and our love for God?***

If you desire to obey the Word out of gratitude for all Christ has done for you, and if you see that desire producing an overall pattern of obedience, then you have no reason to doubt your salvation. Your relationship with God is reflected in how you live.

**QUESTION 3:**

*What does it mean to walk like Jesus walked?*

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**1 John 2:7-11**

**7 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.**

**8 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.**

**9 The one who says he is in the light but hates his brother or sister is in the darkness until now.**

**10 The one who loves his brother or sister remains in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.**

**11 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.**

“Love” repeatedly shows up in 1 John. It appears 24 times in the 105 verses that make up this letter! In this passage John wrote of love as both an old and new command. Love is “an old command” in that it is mentioned in the Old Testament law (Lev. 19:17-18; Deut. 6:5). In fact, Jesus said the entirety of the law could be summed up in the commands to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” and to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37-40).

So, in what sense is the old command also new? We see the newness of this old command in how Christ perfectly obeyed and manifested it. Up to that point, no one had demonstrated love perfectly on earth. Jesus fully and perfectly demonstrated *agape* love, like no one before Him ever had. He showed us what obedience to these commands looks like. Jesus told His disciples, “I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another.” (John 13:34-35). Shortly before He spoke these words, Jesus had even given them an example of love by washing their feet. Love humbly serves others no matter how insignificant the task.

*Love* is a word that is overused. People often say they love hot dogs, hamburgers, baseball, and naps, and in so doing we can lose the deeper, greater sense of love. Love is the highest virtue a person can express toward another. It’s the attribute God revealed when He gave His Son to die on the cross. Through the definition of *agape* love found in 1 Corinthians 13, we realize love is the bond that unites the church. Love is the ingredient that propels missions, and it’s the fuel that ignites revival. When God’s children choose to love, they walk in the light, and the darkness flees. For this reason, John wrote, “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 darkness until now.”

The *light* John referred to is God’s kingdom, which was inaugurated at Christ’s first coming: *the true light is already shining*. Jesus is “the light of the world” (John 8:12), and His kingdom is characterized by both light and love. Our love for God and for others is proof we are citizens of that heavenly kingdom.

The light of Christ is here, but the darkness is not fully eradicated—yet. I recently watched an episode of *Painting with Bob Ross* on TV. In this particular program, Ross started with a dark canvas. He began adding touches of yellow, orange, and red, creating light for the painting. Soon the light began to overtake the darkness

of the canvas. By the time he finished, the darkness didn't look so dark anymore. In this world, the darkness is passing away because it cannot and will not overcome the light of Christ. Christ is victorious!

Christians are the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:14) and as citizens of Christ's kingdom of light, we push back the darkness when we walk in love. If we don't walk in the light, we will be blinded by the darkness. "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."

Loving as Christ loves doesn't come easily. Love can be costly. The love of the Good Samaritan cost him (Luke 10:30-36). God's love for us led Him to the costly sacrifice of His Son. But when we love sacrificially, we are reflecting the love of God, and we are reflecting a right relationship with God. Of course, there will be times when we don't love as we should, but the Christian life is characterized by light, not darkness; love, not hate.

QUESTION 4:

*Why do some people allow themselves to be blinded by hatred?*

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## 1 John 2:15-17

**15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

**16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's possessions—is not from the Father, but is from the world.**

**17 And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.**

John taught us the critical importance of loving our brothers and sisters, but we are not to “love the world or the things in the world.” When John used the word *world*, he was not referring to the people who inhabit this planet. That would be a glaring contradiction to what he wrote in his Gospel: “For God loved the world ... (John 3:16). Nor was John’s use of *world* referring to creation. It would be a contradiction to love God if we hated what He created. Instead, John was talking about the evil system of darkness that encompasses this world. This sin-filled, worldly mindset is manifested in those actions and attitudes that oppose the things of God. Such things as a secular worldview, crime, and immorality stand in opposition to God and should repel the Christian. This corrupt system lures us away from God.

The world’s temptations can be grouped into three categories:

- 1. The lust of the flesh.** This is the desire for selfish pleasure; the person who cares more about himself than others. Most of the time this particular temptation manifests itself in self-centeredness and narcissism.
- 2. The lust of the eyes.** This type of temptation is tied to the greedy longing for gain, always wanting more but never satisfied. This particular temptation usually reveals itself through coveting and feeding our physical desires. The person who gives into this sin always wants the upgrade.
- 3. Pride in one’s possessions.** This temptation refers to envy and the love of popularity, recognition, and applause. People falling captive to this temptation are held captive by the show of materialism. They are showoffs who love to brag and put their possessions on display for others to see.

We are all vulnerable to these sins. Satan and the world are good at marketing these sins to us! This is nothing new! Even the first sin committed included these worldly attitudes. “The woman saw that the tree was good for food [the lust of the flesh] and delightful to look at [lust of the eyes], and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom [the pride of one’s possession]. So she took some of its fruit

and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (Gen. 3:6).

The world appeals to our greatest needs—including the need to belong and the need to have meaning—but it tempts us to meet these needs in wrong ways. Sadly, many are duped into investing in and buying what the world offers. Deceitfully, the world promises more—fame, fortune, and happiness—than it can deliver. It is utter foolishness to fall in love with the things of the world, no matter how appealing they may appear. Why? Because “The world with its lust is passing away.” The ways of the world are coming to an end.

The great news is that “the one who does the will of God remains forever.” God provides us so much more than what the world offers—and it lasts! Only God can give meaning, hope, and comfort through life’s trials and tribulations. Jesus invited us to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you” (Matt. 6:33). The person who seeks the things of God rather than the things of the world is someone who is prepared for eternity—and you can be assured of that! Let your life reflect your relationship with God.

#### QUESTION 5:

*What are some things in the world we are tempted to love?*

#### ENGAGE

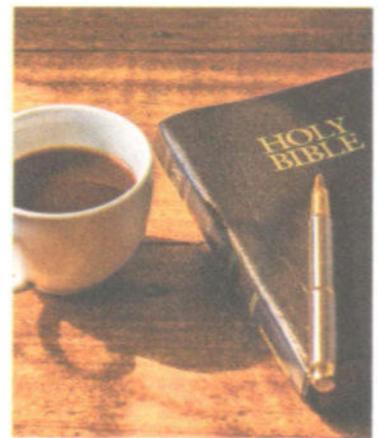
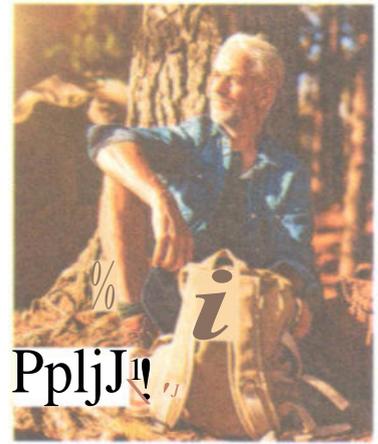
*With which of the three categories in verse 16 do you struggle the most?*

- Lust of the flesh.
- Lust of the eyes.
- Pride in one’s possessions.

*What can you do to overcome the issue you struggle with most.?*

## LIVE IT OUT

- ▶ **Examine your life.** “Make every effort to confirm your calling and election, because if you do these you will never stumble. For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you” (2 Peter 1:10-11). If you feel as though you have fallen short in manifesting a true Christian’s qualities, then, by all means, ask God to forgive you now.
- ▶ **Align your life.** Perhaps you realize you need to realign some things in your life to bring them under God’s will. If so, begin making those changes this week. It might be something as simple as waking up earlier so you can spend quality time with God.
- ▶ **Express concern for others.** Be intentional to look for opportunities to serve someone, and when you see it, don’t hesitate, do it. Be prepared to share with the group the following week. Sharing provides an opportunity to boast in the Lord and encourage others to do the same.



### END NOTES

1. David Allen, *1-3 John: Fellowship In God's Family (Preaching the Word)* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 61.