

# RELATE

## ADULT CONNECT CLASS CURRICULUM

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SENIOR PASTOR



MARCH  
2020

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

## *A Note From Our Pastor*

Dear FBC family and friends,

The first epistle of John challenges us as believers to demonstrate or model who we are in Christ and walk in His ways. This directly correlates to our theme for this year of RELATE which is to identify with or to show a connection between. It is the act of applying what we learn through God's Word and living it out in a very public way. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love me keep my commandments." Make the connection? Loving Christ is connected to our living in obedience to His Word. Now, in 1 John, John reiterates that part of the evidence that we know Christ is that we live according to His Word. When we do not apply and live by the Word and then say we love God, John concludes that we lie. The good news in this is we can live the truth by the empowerment of Christ in us.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God's Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

Last month in this letter, we challenged you to show Christ's love in a practical way. When we RELATE what we hear through the Bible study and make that connection into our everyday routines, love will be demonstrated or rather shown through action.

-Blessings  
Pastor Don



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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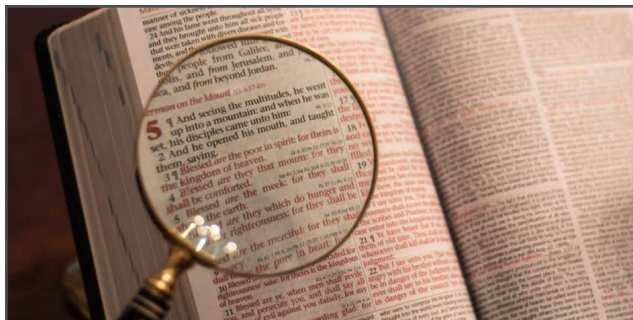


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*March 1, 2020*



# *Reject Lies*

## *1 John 2:21-29*

Focal Verse:

“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.”

1 John 2:27

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## Introduce

In the initial stages of conflict during World War 2, German forces advanced with lightning speed and very little resistance. In only a matter of a few weeks, they occupied Belgium, Holland, and France without much of a fight, catching the whole of Western Europe off guard and unprepared. Even though the British sent their entire army of 300,000 soldiers to aid France, they could not stop the Germans from reaching the coast and threatening their island. At a time when the British nearly lost their entire army on the beaches of Dunkirk, France, Winston Churchill took the reins as Prime Minister. His tenacity and persistence eventually helped lead the British people and the Allies to victory five years later in 1945; however, his leadership style was not free of controversy.



In his first speech to the British people as Prime Minister via radio, Churchill did not present the full scope of the disaster that was unfolding on the beaches of Dunkirk. He thought that keeping certain information from the public and presenting a deceptive account of their strength as a nation would inspire the people to victory. In his actual speech, Churchill argues, "Side by side, unaided except by their kith and kin in great dominions and by the wide empires which rest beneath their shield—side by side, the British and French peoples have advanced to rescue not only Europe but mankind from the foulest and most soul-destroying, tyranny which has ever darkened and stained the pages of history."\* The British and French forces, however, had not advanced, but they were in fact in full retreat, trying to evacuate before facing annihilation.

In the end, the British rescued almost all their troops from Dunkirk and ultimately won the war; yet, this doesn't excuse that parts of this speech were deceptively crafted. In the 2017 movie *Darkest Hour*, several scenes deal with the agonizing decisions Churchill had to make while composing this speech. Although it reflects an interpretation of what may have actually happened during the writing and deliverance of this speech, the movie still shows us how deceptive the world can be at times—even for what we

## Introduce

would consider a noble cause. Before delivering the speech, Churchill gives a copy to Sir Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for War, to read and give his opinion. After reflecting on the speech, Eden laments, “I don’t think so . . . You’re suggesting we’re somehow winning. We’re not.” To which Churchill responds, “I know, but it will inspire them . . . I’m going to imbue them with a spirit of feeling they don’t yet know they have.” Anthony concludes, “You asked my opinion . . . I caution against it.”

Despite the advice of Sir Eden, Churchill delivers the speech as written. In the movie, he then receives a call from a displeased King George VI who asserts, “The public need [sic] to be led—not mislead—not left to work it out for themselves.” Like Churchill’s speech, the world distorts reality by portraying things as we want them to be rather than the way they really are. This encourages people to take unnecessary risks and to seek to determine their own fate by making decisions which seem best to them at the time regardless of the truth. Moreover, the world will also try to deceive us by telling us the things they think we want to hear. Thus, they downplay the personal responsibility for our sinful actions while emphasizing the excitement we can find through our experiences as we seek the things that make us happy and satisfied.

On the contrary, we need to reject the lies of the world and focus on the truth of Christ who will never lead us astray. He doesn’t give us false hope or make things look better than they really are by glossing over our blemishes. Instead, He shows the sinful condition of the world which leads to destruction, but He also offers the only solution in which we can have reconciliation with the Father and eternal life. Through Christ, we can know the truth with absolute certainty, so that we can respond appropriately in Him. Therefore, let us focus on Christ so we can comprehend the truth and live in a way that brings abundant life whereby we can glorify Him in all we do.

Key  
Question

How does the world try to deceive us?

## In Reference



Winston Churchill, “First Broadcast as Prime Minister” (May 19, 1940).



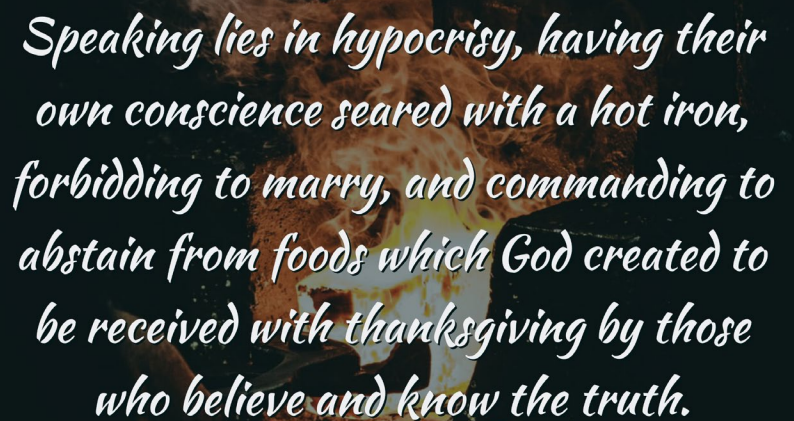
### 1 John 2:21-23

#### **REJECT LIES ABOUT HIS PURPOSE:**

John begins this section by stressing that his audience does indeed **know the truth** because they had heard it directly from him and had it confirmed through the “anointing from the Holy One” ([1 John 2:20](#)). Therefore, he reiterates that he has **not written to them because they do not know the truth, but because they know it** (v. 21). Hence, he wants to remind them of **the truth** to reinforce it, so that they won’t stumble and stray in the maturation of their faith especially because false teaching had previously arisen in the church ([1 John 2:19](#)). Although the false teachers had recently left the community, the remnants of their views likely remained which could continue to cause confusion and confrontation unless believers focused on the foundational truths which they had been taught from the beginning.

When we constantly mix lies with **the truth**, we will become desensitized so that we can no longer identify actual, unadulterated **truth** (1 Tim 4:2-3).

As a result, we start to view reality in terms of the way we see things rather than the way they truly are. Therefore, John emphasizes that **no lie is of the truth**. It may sound odd and pointless to make such a statement until we realize the danger which our culture faces when confronted with believing a



*Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

*1 Timothy 4:2-3*

**lie** or **the truth**. Despite knowing **the truth** and seeing evidence to support it, many people still abandon it and believe what they want. If a **lie** is repeated long enough and loud enough, people will eventually begin to believe it even though they **know the truth!** For this reason, we must remain grounded in **the truth** which God has revealed to us in His Word and confirmed to us through His Holy Spirit!

The deceptive practices and views of society can have a profound impact upon the church if believers don’t constantly remind themselves of **the truth**. For example, much of our society has come to believe that any form of punishment or discipline is

## Instruct

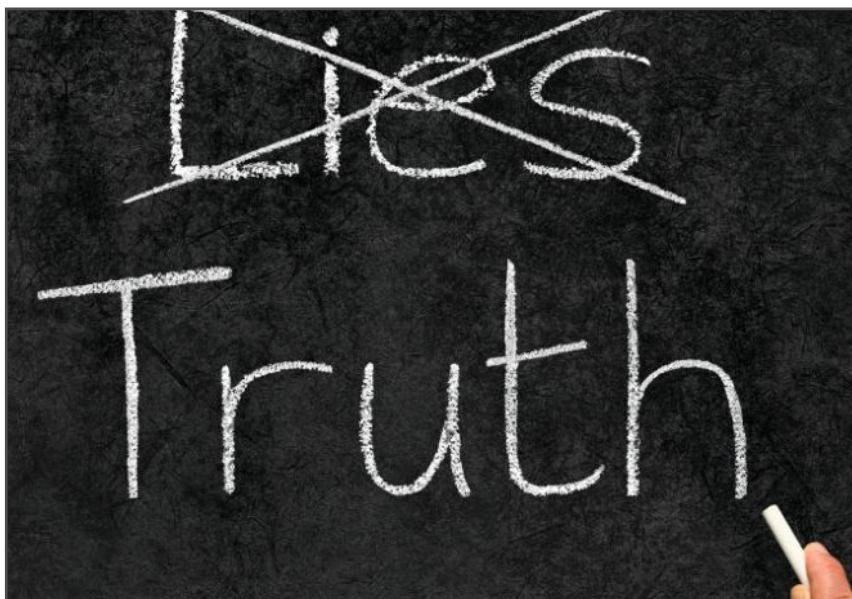
unloving and cruel because it can harm a person's self-esteem by preventing personal expression and growth. Consequently, society tends to emphasize personal rights and privileges to the detriment of the common good for the community; we call this individualism. Thus, we see people living for the moment and basing their choices on how things feel regardless of the consequences. This has directly led to rebelliousness against any authority, a lack of consideration for how one's actions may affect others, and rampant immorality.

In the church, this deceptive view of discipline has negatively influenced the way people relate to God. They either reject Him outrightly because they view the concept of God as old-fashioned and barbaric because He infringes upon their "human" rights or they tend to emphasize His love to the exclusion of His righteous discipline whereby He must punish sin. Many, therefore, regard God as permissive; they wrongly believe that God permits anything as long as it makes a person happy and He will punish no one by sending him to Hell. Conversely, Scripture teaches that discipline constitutes love; therefore, God disciplines out of love, not wrath. Yet, when people refuse to repent, they invite God's wrath upon them by their own choice; they choose to endure God's wrath on their sin because He must punish sin in His righteousness and justness.

What lies has culture propagated that have influenced the way the church views Scripture or certain theological / doctrinal principles?

Question  
# 1

We can further understand this concept of how people begin to believe lies in a very



practical way when we consider how society has come to view promiscuity or infidelity in any form. God has designed marriage to be between one man and one woman for life. This has biological and practical proof which we won't outline here; it should reflect commonsense. However, society has wrongly come to believe that we can express physical

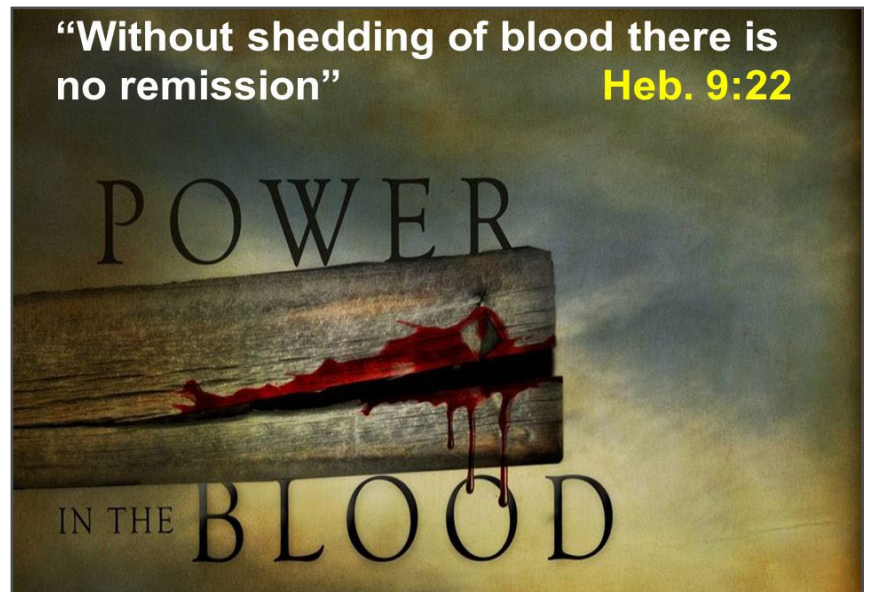
love without any kind of boundaries. Although most would still consider infidelity or cheating as wrong, it has become far too rampant in our society today. People foolishly believe that people who cheat on their spouses actually love the ones with whom they are currently intimate and they will be faithful to them! However, what prevents one who has been unfaithful from cheating on the cheater? If they've been unfaithful before, they will likely be unfaithful again, but people come to believe a **lie** that they won't cheat on *them* despite the clear evidence they themselves have witnessed and in which they have wrongly participated!

What other moral choices has society dismissed that the Bible clearly demarcates as sin?

Question  
# 2

In verse 22, John specifically outlines the theology at risk of being influenced by these false teachers. He poses the question, “**Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?**” By denying Jesus is **the Christ** or Messiah, these false teachings present two problems for the church: 1) they deny His unique relationship to **the Father** as God in the flesh and 2) they distort the purpose of His coming to save and reconcile the world. First, John points out that **the antichrist denies the Father and the Son**. In other words, he **denies** that Jesus is God and has always existed even before the creation of the universe. Jesus has always existed as God—past, present, and future. Never at any point did He cease to be God or did He become God; He was always God from the very beginning!

Second, John reveals that **whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either** (v. 23). Thus, they do not have “fellowship” or a relationship with **the Father** because they have rejected the saving power of **the Son**. If Jesus did not physically come in the flesh and die for our sins, we can have no forgiveness at all because only He is the way to salvation ([Heb 9:22](#)). Similarly, we cannot have life if He did not resurrect bodily from the grave ([1 Cor 15:16-17](#)). Salvation requires both! Therefore, John reminds us the source of



## Instruct

our spiritual life: the one **who acknowledges the Son has the Father** too. To have life, we must believe Jesus is **the Christ** (Messiah) who physically came to earth to die on our behalf and triumphed over sin and death by resurrecting from the grave three days later. We cannot have life if we reject Jesus as the Messiah and refuse to submit to Him by confessing and repenting of our sins ([1 John 1:9](#)). There is no other way for salvation!

### 1 John 2:24-25

#### **REMAIN FOCUSED ON HIS PROMISE:**

Because the truth can so easily become corrupted by the deception of even a small group, John emphasizes the need to remind ourselves about what we have been taught **from the beginning** (v. 24). **Therefore**, he urges us to **let** the truth of the gospel **abide in us which** we have **heard from the beginning**. When we remain faithful to the Word of God which we have **heard from the beginning**, we **will also abide in the Son and in the Father** ([1 John 2:14](#)). To **abide** in this context means that we have a relationship with Christ through which He has transformed us to live in holiness and complete obedience to His Word. Not only do we have a cognitive understanding of His Word, but we also apply it in how we live! In Christ, we immediately move from being dead in our sins to having life in Him which is characterized by our adherence to His commands and our surrender to His leadership ([Eph 2:1-6](#)).

Through his use of the term **abide** in this verse, John reflects upon Jesus' teaching from



John 15:5 where He asserts, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." Apart from Christ we cannot have **eternal life**. Hence, John reminds us that God **has promised us eternal life** through His Son who is **the Christ** (v. 25). In nature, the moment a branch becomes severed from a tree or vine it withers and

dies; it cannot live on its own without the life-sustaining power of the vine! In the same way, we cannot have life unless we **abide** or remain connected in a relationship with Christ ([John 14:6](#)). Moreover, a branch that remains connected to the vine will receive life-sustaining nutrients and it will bear fruit consistent with the type of vine to which it is connected. Consequently, to **abide** in Christ means that we bear the fruit of righteousness and holiness consistently with the character of our heavenly Father.

When we abide in Christ, what type of fruit do we bear or produce?

Question  
# 3

As believers, we must remain focused upon Christ's **promise** of **eternal life**—not because we can earn a reward or achieve greater standing, rather so we can reflect His character and remain connected to His truth. When we consciously reflect upon the life He has given us, it will influence the choices we make. We become intentional guarding the truth of Scripture and using it to evaluate every choice we make. Therefore, we don't use Scripture as a proof text out of context to justify our actions, but we hear God speak and change our actions to match His holy requirements. God will never contradict Himself; therefore, **the truth** we hold should always match His Word. If what we believe or do contradicts His Word in any way, it is a **lie** and not the **truth**. God provides the ability to discern **the truth** from a **lie** when we remain connected to Him!

How does the world often misuse Scripture to justify their actions? How does abiding in Christ prevent this?

Question  
# 4

## 1 John 2:26-27

### **RELY ON THE SPIRIT FOR PERCEPTION:**

John further helps us to understand how the Lord assists us in discerning the truth by sending the Holy Spirit upon whom we can rely. As followers of Christ, we have an advantage the world does not have when people **try to deceive us** (v. 26). God has given us **the anointing which abides** or lives **in** us (v. 27). As we learned last week, the word **anointing** comes from the same word often translated as spiritual gift. The gift that Christ has given us that **teaches** us **concerning all things** and **is true and not a lie** is the Holy Spirit. In John 14:26, Jesus comforts the disciples by saying, "But the Helper, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring

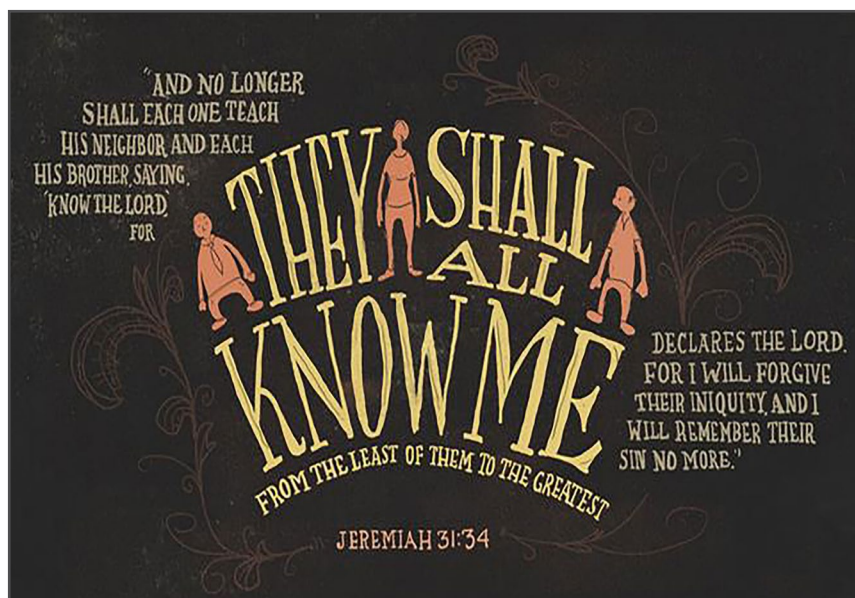
## Instruct

to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” Every believer has such access to the Spirit, or **anointing**, if we would only surrender to His complete control. Therefore, the anointing isn’t some hyper form of spirituality or second blessing, but rather the ability God gives us to distinguish the truth from **a lie**, so we can put truth into practice.

In what situations has the Spirit reminded you of what Jesus / Scripture teaches?

Question  
# 5

The way in which John constructs verse 27 reminds us of the new covenant which the



Lord makes through the prophet Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 31:34, God reveals, “No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” According to this

covenant, God will have a personal relationship with each individual by forgiving his sin and reconciling him to both Himself and the believing community at large—a concept which had become somewhat misconstrued in Israel. Christ, not other humans, became the mediator of this covenant by virtue of shedding His own blood. Consequently, we don’t have to go through other people to have a relationship with the Father; we go through Christ alone. Through Christ, we can know how to have a relationship with the Father directly because He convicts, restores, and transforms! When John declares that we **do not need anyone to teach** us, therefore, he isn’t suggesting that we can know or learn everything on our own by forsaking corporate teaching and preaching in the church. Rather the personal relationship we have with the Holy Spirit helps us discern the truth and know right from wrong as we learn from others in the community. Why would John need to write this letter to teach the truth if they already knew everything and needed no teaching? Scripture clearly portrays that we should point one another to God and help one another learn collectively

as a community; the early church, for example, continued to meet regularly (daily) to study Scripture and learn from the apostles who had sat under Jesus' teaching. Furthermore, Proverbs 27:17 acknowledges, "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend."

John is contending that our personal relationship with the Spirit gives us insight into Scripture and helps us to distinguish the truth from false teaching. The Spirit keeps us from possessing and practicing errant teachings or beliefs. Although as new believers and even maturing believers we need other gifted members in the community to teach us and help us grow in our faith, we should always evaluate their teaching and "personal experiences" against Scripture. In this way, the Spirit will immediately help us to evaluate the truthfulness of what someone has said or what they practice if we listen to Him ([2 Peter 1:19-21](#)). Let us, therefore, rely upon the Spirit to teach us the truth as we study His Word and keep us accountable to live by the truth that God has disseminated therein.

How does the Spirit help safeguard the truth and reject false doctrine? What examples can you give when the Spirit has helped you to discern the truth?

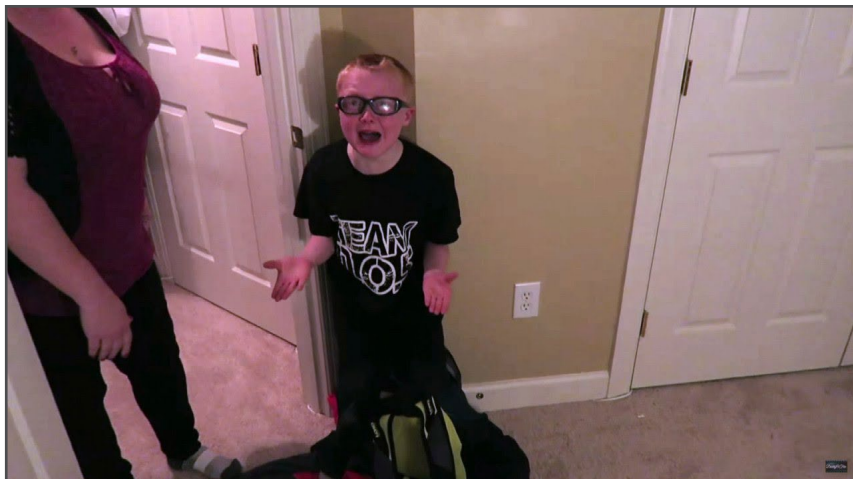
Question  
# 6

## **1 John 2:28-29**

### **READY OURSELVES FOR HIS PAROUSIA (RETURN):**

John somewhat shifts gears to encourage us to be ready for Christ's return by practicing righteousness. He implores us to **abide in Him**, so that **when He appears** again that we **may have confidence** and **not be ashamed** (v. 28). Since Jesus can return at any moment ([1 Thess 5:2](#)), we need to remain prepared at all times, so that we can have confidence we have lived obediently to His commands and represented Him well as His children. For this reason, John reminds us that **everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him** because we **know that He is righteous** (v. 29).

Probably, most of us have experienced a similar situation either from a parent's or child's perspective: parents will leave their child home alone when old enough after school, to run errands, or for a number of other reasons. Having been trained by their parents what to do, given boundaries, and shown the expectations by which they ought to abide, the child should clearly know how he should behave. Often, however, a child thinks that he can act according to his own desires and the parents won't ever find out. Sometimes the parents come home unexpectedly and catch the child red-



handed in some forbidden activity, not paying attention. The child is both embarrassed and horrified that his parents returned at such an inopportune time. As a child of God, we shouldn't want the Lord to return and catch us unprepared or, even worse, in a compromising and unflattering situation.

In order to be ready for Christ's return, we must know the truth and apply it in our lives. We cannot know the truth, however, if we don't cultivate our relationship with Christ and abide in Him and His Word. If we don't faithfully study His Word, we will become more susceptible to the lies and deceptions of this world—which is the problem that most Christians face today because they become distracted in their focus by the secular culture. If we know His Word, then the Holy Spirit helps us to live by His principles when we completely surrender to His leadership. For this reason, having been created in His image and having been restored in right relationship, we must **practice righteousness** in our lives just as He always exudes holiness in His character.

In [Matthew 25:1-30](#), Jesus uses two parables about how we should prepare for His second coming: the ten virgins and the talents. Both parables emphasize the same point; we should stand ready to receive Christ and be engaged in His work which He has plainly outlined in Scripture. Thus, we must cultivate our relationship with Him daily, live righteously according to the standards which He set and by which Christ lived as an example, mature in our faith and walk, serve, and share the gospel on mission. Although Christianity is not so much about what we do, but about who we are, what we do reflects who we are and reveals to whom we belong! Therefore, we must imitate His **righteousness** if we belong to Him. We cannot say we belong to Him and continually live in sin without conviction. On the contrary, we will live in truth and **righteousness** by imitating His holy character!



In the introduction, we saw how Winston Churchill painted an inaccurate picture of the early stages of World War 2 in an attempt to inspire the nation to fight tirelessly against the peril of Nazi Germany. The world, in many ways, tells us the things they think we want to hear rather than the truth. We may think it's noble to give false hope out of a kind-hearted spirit or encourage people by embellishing reality to inspire them, but in the end it's truly dangerous and destructive. We need to hear and acknowledge the truth, so we can know our limitations, our faults, and where we need to turn for help. For example, the world tells us that we can do anything on which we set our minds; we just have to persist and try hard enough and we will succeed. However, we cannot save ourselves from sin and death no matter how hard we may try. We need a Savior to deliver us!

We need to reject the lies of this world, so that we can measure ourselves against the perfection of Christ and live by His standards. When we compare ourselves to Christ, we will see how far we fall short; at the same time, however, we have a Savior who will conform us to His image and help us practice righteousness if we surrender complete control to Him. He doesn't leave us alone to fend for ourselves, but He has sent His Spirit to guide and transform us; therefore, we can have confidence and faith that we will mature in Him if we allow Him to work in us! Therefore, let us reject the lies of this world, acknowledge the truth of the Savior by abiding in Him and His Word, and practice righteousness as He aids us in conforming to His image every day.

## ***Incorporate***

When we remind ourselves about God's promise and purpose in Christ, how should that affect the way we live? How does focusing on the promise of eternal life keep us from falling into error?

As a church, how does the Holy Spirit help keep us united and on the right track? How does the Spirit protect the church from accepting or practicing errant theology or morality?

As a church, how should we prepare and be ready for Christ's return? Why should we live with both a sense of expectancy and urgency?

## ***Journal: Document God's Work***

*March 8, 2020*



# *Reveal the Lord*

## *1 John 3:1-12*

Focal Verse:

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

1 John 3:2

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## Introduce

An episode of *The Andy Griffith Show* featured Ernest T. Bass who had come into town from the hills to find a date at a well-to-do party hosted by socialite Mrs. Wiley. As an uneducated, uncultured, and uncouth individual, Ernest T. had no idea how to behave socially at such an exclusive party. While filing a police report so they could track down and prosecute the unwanted guest who crashed her party, Mrs. Wiley and others in attendance described his unrefined and unacceptable behavior. After sticking his hand in the punch bowl, he used napkins to sop up the liquid and then threw them at the ceiling. If that weren't odd enough, he devoured watermelons whole—the rind and everything.



Upon leaving the party, he hurled a rock through a window as he cackled wildly. To help him find a date with a cultured woman, Andy and Barney tasked themselves with teaching Ernest T. and transforming him into acceptable company. Andy took him home, cleaned him up, and gave him a new suit, but this only slightly altered his outward appearance. They still needed to change his behavior, so they began etiquette lessons. They tried to teach him how to talk without an accent from the hills, how to hold a conversation on different subjects as well as how to greet people, how to walk and enter a room with dignity and class, and finally how to eat and drink in a culturally appropriate way. By the end of the training, he seemed to have understood and adopted these mannerisms, so they now had to take him to a party so they could test if he could indeed pass for a refined gentleman.

The party began well and he impressed everyone, including Mrs. Wiley. As the couples' dance began, however, his true colors became evident when he couldn't cut-in and dance with the girl he liked. After several attempts to cut-in, Ernest T. grabbed a vase and smashed it on the other man's head. With that, Mrs. Wiley immediately recognized him and exclaimed, "Oh no, it's him—that animal, that creature." To which Ernest T.'s accent returned when he replied, "Creechter, who you callin' a creechter?" In the long run, Ernest T. couldn't hide who he truly was; his character and personality eventually

## Introduce

showed no matter how much he tried or how much Andy and Barney invested to transform him.

Similarly, those who don't have a relationship with Christ may fool others for a time, but eventually their true character will become evident. For those of us who have a relationship with Christ, we should strive to be like Him ([1 John 3:2](#)). Since He has truly transformed us and made us a new creation ([2 Cor 5:17](#)), we can imitate Him; therefore, we should live like He created and transformed us to live. Because we still live in a sinful world, we will sin and err at times, but we should not repeatedly live in a lifestyle of sin. We should strive to be like Him, living in righteousness and holiness. Consequently, we ought to reveal the character of the Lord consistently in our lives, so that the world may know we belong to Him. We must represent Him honorably and nobly to the world by abstaining from sin and practicing righteousness in everything we do.

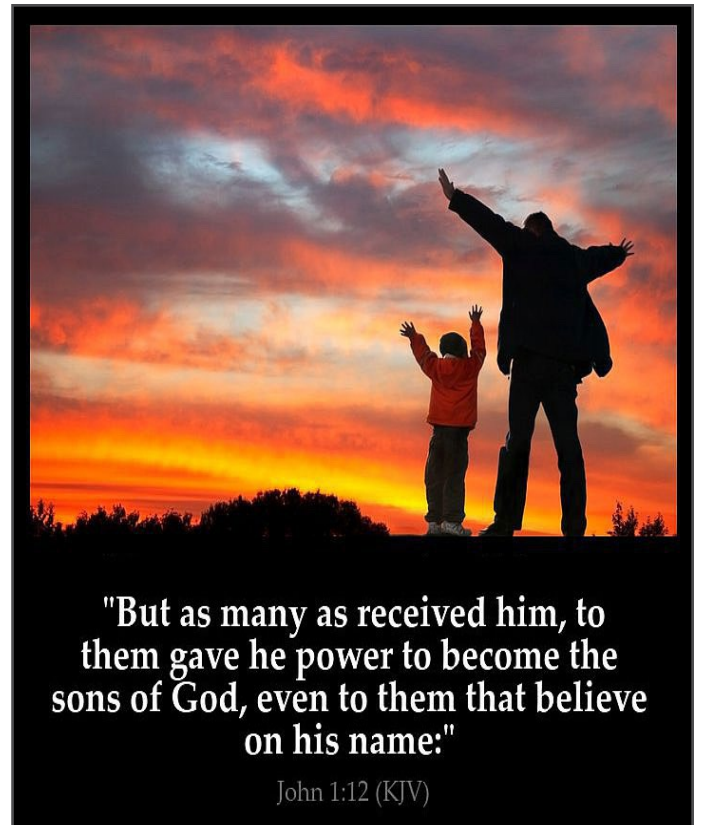
Key  
Question

How should we reveal the Lord in our lives?

### 1 John 3:1-3

#### ***RADIATE PURITY:***

When someone loves us, we can see incontrovertible evidence which demonstrates how much **love** he or she has ([Rom 5:8](#)). The evidence of that **love** is clear and definitive; we don't have to guess or read between the lines. On the contrary, we can *know* for sure how much **love** a person has through what he or she does and says. True **love** doesn't send mixed signals and never presents a muddled picture! To observe this kind of true **love**, we need only look to God. Therefore, John urges us to ponder God's **love** for us by beholding or recognizing **what manner of love** He **has bestowed upon us** (v. 1). In this context, the word **behold** encourages us to stop and look at the evidence as if someone were standing and pointing at something tangible. Just as if a husband or wife proudly exclaimed with an index finger extended toward a priceless gift, "Look at what my spouse did *for me!*" Thus, God has displayed His great **love** by graciously providing a way that we can become His **children** through the sacrifice of His one and only Son (John 1:12). Therefore, we can point to the cross as the quintessential measure of God's love for us!



**"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"**

John 1:12 (KJV)

To what evidence can you point in your life that demonstrates how much God loves you?

Question  
# 1

Although we can undoubtedly *know* that God loves us, we may not fully understand why He loves sinners such as we. Through a relationship with Jesus, we have received all the rights and privileges as heirs, being delivered from death to life despite our disobedience. God has given (**bestowed**) that privilege to us freely without condition to anyone who would repent and accept the gift of eternal life! In ancient Greek, the word translated **what manner (of love)** carried the idea of "what country" from which something or

## Instruct

someone had come, but by John's day it had come to mean what type or kind. Still, the ancient meaning serves as a good illustration to the incomprehensibility of God's **love**. In his commentary, Akin aptly notes, "God's love is foreign to humankind in that we cannot understand the magnitude of such love."\* For this reason, Paul can write in his prayer, "To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge" ([Eph 3:19](#)). We can know God's **love**, but we cannot understand it fully because we have nothing to which we can compare it here on earth!

### In Reference



Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), p. 133.

Without any parallel in **the world** among human relationships, those who reject Christ cannot comprehend this kind of **love**. John, consequently, explains that **the world does not know us because it did not know Him**. When we exhibit the **love** of God in our lives, **the world** will misunderstand because it doesn't fit *their* concept of **love**. To **the world**, **love** is *conditional* because it depends upon reciprocity, common interests,

and shared goals; it is primarily *physical* because it depends upon appearance and personal preference; finally, it is *emotionally driven* because it often selfishly depends upon the benefits gained by the person, such as is evident in the question many ask, "Do I feel loved?" On the other hand, God's **love** is *unconditional* because He loves those who don't return His love and still remain wayward and disobedient; it is *immutable* or unchangeable because His **love** doesn't depend upon what we do and even His discipline constitutes a form of **love** directed toward us ([Heb 12:5](#)); finally, God's **love** is a *state of being* which doesn't change with emotions or feeling. God doesn't seek to gain anything, except

For I am persuaded that  
**NEITHER** Death  
Life  
Angels  
Principalities  
Things Present  
Things to Come  
Powers  
Height  
Depth  
Created Things  
will be able to separate  
us from the

*Love* of  
GOD

ROMANS 8:38-39



authentic fellowship with us, while He, in fact, gave everything through Christ to establish that relationship.

How would you compare the idea of love in the world to the love that God shows?

Question  
# 2

Through Christ, we **now** have become **children of God** who should bear the character of our heavenly Father, so each day until the Son returns we should “practice righteousness” in order to become more like Him ([1 John 2:29](#)). Yet, we still live in a dysfunctional and corrupt world gripped by sin, so we too remain susceptible to err if we don’t take steps to guard against temptation by submitting to the leadership of the Spirit. Hence, John highlights the propensity for imperfection by pointing out that **it has not yet been revealed what we shall be** (v. 2). However, as we shall see especially in verses 4-9, the fact that we live in an imperfect world doesn’t excuse sin! We should constantly strive for perfection to **be like Him**; we should radiate or reveal His purity in everything—our thoughts, decisions, perspectives, actions, and relationships. Thus, we should start practicing for who we will become fully at His return!

When Christ returns and calls us all home together—that is **when He is revealed—we shall be like Him** because **we shall see Him as He is**. One day, when Christ rids the universe of sin by expelling it, we will all be restored to perfection because we will have a visible example in Him to follow. Even now, however, those of us who have **this** future **hope** of eternal life must purify ourselves **just as He is pure** because He has already raised us to walk in newness of life and begun the process of transformation (v. 3). We must be intentional about our pursuit of purity and actively participate because it won’t happen automatically without investing effort. At salvation, Christ does “cleanse” us from all sin and unrighteousness ([1 John 1:7, 9](#)), but as **children of God** He gives us the responsibility to remain pure. He doesn’t leave us alone to achieve this purity on our own power, but He has sent His Spirit to help and guide us; therefore, Paul reminds us, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:25). In the remainder of the verses we’ll study this week, John relates what type of purity the Spirit will produce in conjunction with us when we submit to Him: the rejection of lawlessness and sin, the reflection of righteousness, and residing in love.

After we have relationship with Christ, how are we responsible for pursuing purity? Why is living in an imperfect world not an excuse for sin?

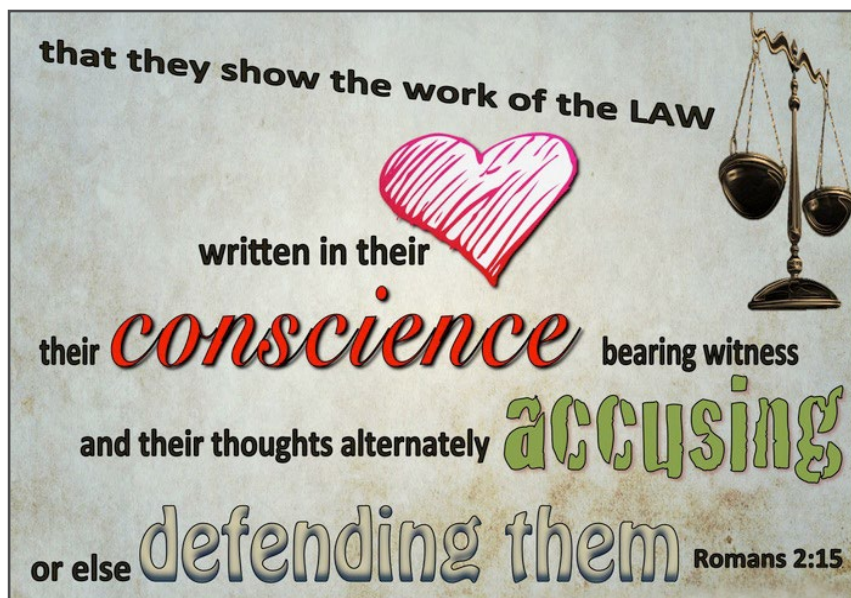
Question  
# 3

## 1 John 3:4-6

### RENOUNCE LAWLESSNESS:

In contrast to the purity described in verse 3 which should characterize the children of God, John announces that **lawlessness** and **sin** should not control our lives (v. 4). To understand the seriousness of **sin**, we must first realize that it's not merely the accidental breaking of rules, but rather it's a willful defiance of God; therefore, John notes that **whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness**. Using the present tense for the word translated **commits** (literally in Greek "does") signifies a deliberate, habitual action in which people participate; it reflects a lifestyle choice. People sin because they choose to sin, not because they simply can't help themselves!

To commit **lawlessness**, therefore, conveys the idea that a person has knowingly and deliberately broken the law. Law, in this context, certainly includes the Law which God



communicated through Moses, but also the moral code that He has written on every person's heart guided by their consciences (Rom 2:12-15). God has given us all clear boundaries regardless of culture or ethnicity which He has objectively determined apart from human input. Therefore, we sin when we break these innate laws that God has written on our consciences

regardless of what human culture may say at the time about what constitutes morality in their view!

As we look around the world today, we see rampant **lawlessness** where individuals do what they want regardless of the boundaries that have been established or the consequences that may be enforced. For example, both according to the Ten Commandments and human consciences people know it's wrong to murder, but that knowledge doesn't prevent them from murdering; they also know it's wrong to hate and disparage others created in God's image, but they continue to hate their enemies. They intentionally do these things whether pre-meditated or on the spur of the

moment. They know the law or have a sense of innate morality, but violate it anyway even though they may attempt to justify their actions. We could list many more items here, such as theft, lying, sexual immorality in all forms, etcetera, but what we must clearly understand is nothing excuses our choices; we all stand guilty when we choose to sin.

What is the danger allowing the culture to define morality? Why can we not justify sin in any form even if culture refuses to regard something as sin?

Question  
# 4

Now that Christ has come, we have even less excuse to sin because **He was manifested to take away our sins** and He set the perfect example for us to follow, for **in Him there is no sin** at all (v. 5). Here, John switches from Christ's second coming ([1 John 2:28-29; 3:2](#)) back to His first coming to emphasize that we have a visible, tangible example to follow. Never at any time—past, present, or future—did Christ sin ([Heb 4:15](#)); therefore, He could provide the perfect, sinless sacrifice who could die in our place ([John 1:29](#)). Because we have such a Savior and example, we too have the ability to strive for perfection. For this reason, John says that **whoever abides in Him does not sin** and the one who **sins has not seen Him** and doesn't **know** (have a relationship) **Him** (v. 6). We must be careful not to misunderstand what John is saying. He isn't saying that a believer will never sin, but that we will not live in a state of habitual sin. Again, the present tense of the phrase **does not sin** indicates a continual lifestyle of sin which exhibits no transformation by Christ or any conviction by the Spirit. The person who **sins** continues unabated without remorse. In contrast, believers will experience conviction when they sin and confess / repent so that Christ will cleanse them and restore them into right fellowship ([1 John 1:9](#)). Recall in 2:1, John states the purpose for this writing, "My 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

*for if we go on*  
S I N N I N G  
*after receiving the*  
K N O W L E D G E  
*of the* T R U T H  
*there no longer remains a*  
S A C R I F I C E F O R  
S I N S

hebrews 10:26

## Instruct

righteous.” Therefore, as believers, we must renounce **lawlessness** and seek to imitate Christ by living a transformed life in opposition to the world around us.

Based on Romans 6, why is grace not a license to sin?

Question  
# 5

## 1 John 3:7-9

### **REFLECT RIGHTEOUSNESS:**

Having stated what we ought not do, John now states what we ought to do—or more aptly ought to be. We ought to practice **righteousness** just **as Christ is righteous** (v. 7). **Righteousness** doesn’t mean that we legalistically follow the letter of the law like a checklist, but that we live by the Spirit to fulfill the true intention of the law. For example, most of probably haven’t physically murdered anyone which technically fulfills the obligation of the law in a legalistic way. Yet, this principle entails so much more when we examine it through the eyes of the Spirit. One who is angry at his brother without cause ([Matt 5:21-22](#)) or hates his brother ([1 John 3:10, 15](#)) is guilty of murder—probably most of us would stand guilty of breaking this principle at some point in our lives! Therefore, we should obey the law not just to get by or fulfill it to the “letter,” but as the Spirit leads so that we can exhibit an even higher standard of **righteousness** and morality.

How does following the Spirit look in contrast to following the letter of the law?

Question  
# 6

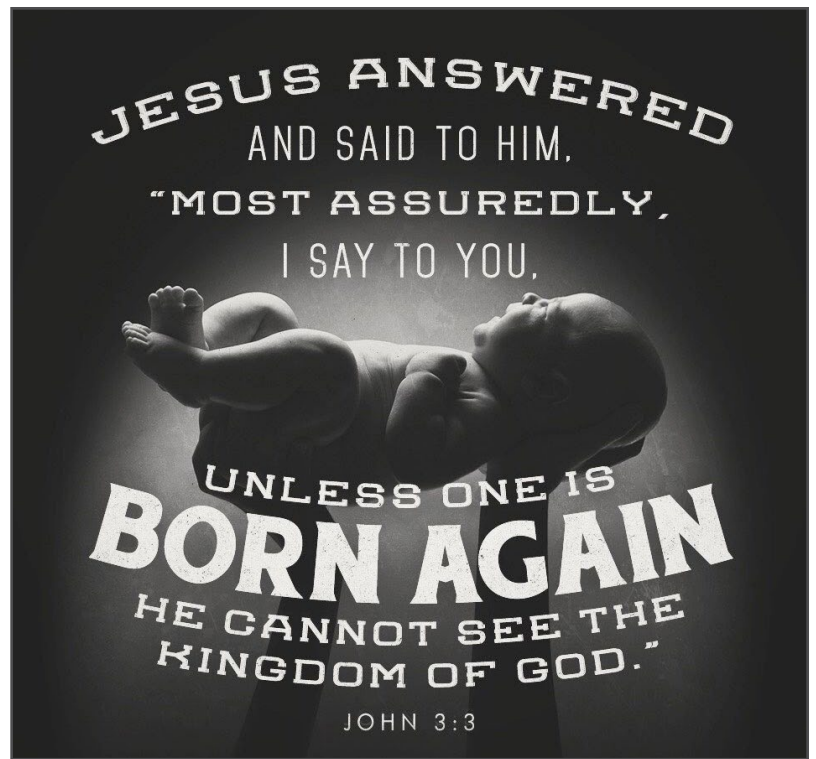
Furthermore, as children of God, we ought to reveal the character of our Father by reflecting **righteousness** or holiness in everything we do. In the introduction, we observed how Ernest T. Bass reverted to his former traits because he had not truly been transformed. He merely covered up his inadequacies for a while before his true character showed through. Similarly, how we consistently live or behave reveals the father to whom we actually belong. If we live a lifestyle of sin without conviction and no remorse, our father **is the devil** who **has sinned from the beginning** (v. 8). In a confrontation with the Pharisees, Jesus exclaims, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him” ([John 8:44](#)). Conversely,

the one who **has been born of God does not** live a life characterized by habitual **sin**, for God is his heavenly Father whom he reflects (v. 9).

John reiterates the **purpose** for which Christ first came to earth (i.e. **was manifested**) that **He** would **destroy the works of the devil**—namely sin and death which He defeated through His crucifixion and resurrection. For those who repent of their sins through Christ, we are no longer enslaved to sin and subject to a second death ([Rom 6:16-17](#)), but we have been set

free and given a new life ([2 Cor 5:17](#)). As Jesus teaches Nicodemus, we have life by being “born again” ([John 3:3](#)). Thus, John reminds us in verse 9 that **whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in Him; and he cannot sin because he has been born of God**. As we learned in the previous section ([1 John 3:6](#)), the way John constructs this phrase in the present tense in Greek points to on-going, habitual sin for which a person has no conviction and refuses to repent. Again, John isn’t saying that we won’t ever sin as believers, but that we will mature and not keep repeating the same sins.

In the end, we will reflect the **righteous** character of our heavenly Father because it will come naturally when we surrender to the Spirit. Even here in this present world, we often pick up the traits of our earthly parents! Recently, a series of Progressive insurance commercials tries to comically depict how we pick up our parents’ quirky or bad habits, so they include the tagline: “Don’t become your parents.” In contrast, however, God has no bad habits and **is righteous** all the time; we should strive to become like Him! We should want others to see that we differ from the rest of the world and that we represent our Father nobly and honorably by refusing to live in a lifestyle of sin!



What habits or characteristics does God have that we should imitate in our lives?

Question  
# 7

### 1 John 3:10-12

#### **RESIDE IN LOVE:**

Finally, we see the last characteristic by which we ought to live in imitation of our heavenly Father. We ought to reside in **love**. In fact, John sees this as such an essential



characteristic that it becomes his main theme from here in chapter 3 through the first part of chapter 5! Therefore, we will only briefly discuss it here and will develop the theme of **love** as we continue our study of 1 John over the next month. In this current passage, John continues to differentiate between the character of **the children of God** and **the children of the devil** (v. 10). The **children of God practice righteousness** which we have seen in detail and they **love their brother**. As we will learn in the coming weeks, **love** for all people,

not just those who **love** us in return, distinguishes us as belonging to the Lord (Luke 6:32). Oppositely, **the children of the devil** do not practice any of these things and continue to walk in darkness by practicing evil.

For this reason, John emphasizes the command to **love** because it embodies the very character of God. In fact, he reminds us that we have **heard this message from the beginning: we should love one another** (v. 11). As we learned in [1 John 2:1-10](#), the command to **love** is the foundation for the Old Testament as well as the New. **Love** existed **from the beginning** because it is who God is ([1 John 4:8, 16](#)). Sin, however, has corrupted the concept of **love** in mankind which in turn caused a broken relationship with God and dysfunctional relationships with other people. Therefore, John gives an example of the dysfunction that entered the world through sin by pointing to the animosity between two brothers: **Cain** and Abel (v. 12). From [Genesis 4:3-15](#), we learn this animosity centered around their offerings to the Lord. Cain became incensed when God accepted his brother's offering, but not his. So, he rose up and murdered him.

Whereas they should have loved each other as brothers and reconciled their differences maturely, **Cain** resorted to violence. Consequently, John reports that **Cain who was of the wicked one murdered his brother because his works were evil** and Abel's **were righteous**. In the view of the world, **love** is conditional because it largely depends upon what one receives or how it makes one feel at the moment. When **love** is conditional rather than a lifestyle which doesn't change based upon external circumstances, it creates all kinds of dysfunction because people will base their choices upon selfish motives—even if they refuse to admit it! Rather than amend his ways to reflect God's **righteousness**, **Cain** selfishly sought to eliminate what *he* identified as his "problem." In reality, however, Cain's attitude which led to sin, not his **brother** Abel, was *his* problem!

How does the sin of selfishness distort our idea of love?

Question  
# 8

To **love** others in the way God intended and designed **from the beginning**, we must have our priorities in the right place. We must first **love** the Lord with all our being, so that we can **love** one another. If we fail to make the Lord the priority in our lives, our **love** becomes tainted and misdirected because in the end we will always become selfish—no matter how hard we may try or how much we may deny it just like **Cain** did in this example! Instead of repeating Cain's example, we need to look at Christ's **love** for our motivation. He didn't focus on His own needs and desires, but He first sought to do the will of the Father because He loved Him ([John 14:31](#)). In turn, Jesus became the visible expression of God's **love** to us ([John 17:26](#)). He placed our need for a Savior above His very own life and died in our place as the greatest expression of love this world will ever know! Just as He has loved us, therefore, let us **love one another** and **practice righteousness** in all we do, so that others may see His character in us.

When we experience the life-changing power of Christ, He will impute, or instill, His righteousness in us whereby we will begin to reveal His character to the world around us. Thus, He transforms us in a tangible way—not only moving us from death to life, but also moving us from a lifestyle of sin to a lifestyle of righteousness. No longer should we live in lawlessness in which we selfishly seek to gratify our desires regardless of the consequences, but we should live obediently according to the principles that God has outlined in His Word. Most visibly, this transformed living reflects His righteousness in rejecting sin and residing in love. No longer do we love the things of this world ([1 John 2:15](#)), but we love the Lord above all and reveal His character by loving others.

Love doesn't mean that we tolerate or accept sin; God doesn't. On the contrary, true love for others means that we point them to the source of love: Christ. Just as Christ loved us despite our sin and offered reconciliation to us, we ought to love others unconditionally and show them what true reconciliation in Christ looks like. Although we will still sin and need forgiveness at times, we shouldn't live a lifestyle of habitual sin where we make the same mistakes repeatedly and cheapen the grace the Lord offers. Instead, we ought to strive for perfection and imitate Christ. Let us, therefore, now start revealing what Christ has made us, looking forward to how He will completely transform us into His image when He returns to gather us home where we will see Him face to face.



## ***Incorporate***

Why should we already live a life characterized by purity in imitation of Christ even though we live in a fallen world that continues to sin? If we don't live in purity, what effect does it have upon the rest of the world?

How do we see lawlessness in our society today? How has this affected the church? How should we as believers respond?

In what ways should we show love to fellow believers as well as the secular world around us?

*March 15, 2020*



# *Recognize Love*

## *1 John 3:13-24*

Focal Verse:

“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

1 John 3:16

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## Introduce

Having been married over forty years, the love that Mitchell and Claire had for one another had grown as they both grew closer in their relationship with the Lord.

Even though they now better understood the concept of love in their 70s, it hadn't always been that way. As a new couple, Mitchell tried to show his love for Claire by periodically buying things on special occasions like Valentine's Day or their anniversary. He thought the act of giving these tokens would somehow replace other deficiencies, such as the



lack of quality time they could spend together. He did constantly tell her that he loved her and never left the house without uttering these words, but he still primarily demonstrated his love at these special times of year. The rest of the time he dealt with the hecticness of life—particularly in his career and getting adjusted to married life in general.

Although Claire appreciated the effort her husband made to take her to dinner occasionally and how he remembered significant days, she still longed for more intimacy. Yet, she herself didn't quite know how to demonstrate it to Mitchell either. As they grew older and their bodies began showing signs of aging; both developed arthritis in various joints. Claire's hands hurt so much that she couldn't do the things she once did with ease around the house. So, Mitchell began doing those things for his wife even though he had bad knees and it caused him great pain. He would endure the pain, so that his wife wouldn't have to! At some points, Mitchell couldn't even bend over to tie his favorite pair of sneakers after working around the house. With her riddled fingers that hurt every time she pulled on the laces or made a loop, Claire persisted in tying them for her husband despite the wrenching pain she experienced. They had come to understand what it truly meant to love one another! Certainly, as John teaches, we should "not love in word or in tongue [only], but in deed and in truth" ([1 John 3:18](#)). We ought to tell others that God has placed in our lives that we love them and we also ought to do nice things for them and make memories together, but

## Introduce

true love has much more substance than physical things. If we truly love someone, we will put them first regardless of our own needs that we may have; we will spend quality time with them to encourage, support, and be there for them no matter what may happen. When we love someone, we will certainly have a multitude of benefits from that relationship; however, we cannot enter a relationship thinking about what we can get or how we can benefit. Love requires that we make sacrifices and focus on giving of ourselves; when we give sacrificially, we will also receive many benefits of which we might not have even been aware.

If we carefully and purposefully read Scripture, we can learn what it means to love someone. John contends that we can “know love” because Christ voluntarily gave His life by dying on the cross in our place ([1 John 3:16](#)). Christ didn’t enter a relationship by thinking about what He could gain from it—whether it was a name above all names from His Father or anything else. Rather, He entered a relationship by thinking about what He could give—His life! We need to follow the same example that He has set. To recognize and understand love, we must look no further than the love that Christ has expressed for us. In the same way that He has loved us, let us love others; let others see the love of Christ demonstrated in us!

Key  
Question

What does true love look like?

### 1 John 3:13-15

#### ***RESPOND TO OTHERS IN LOVE:***

Having illustrated the consequences of uncontrolled hatred through Cain's murderous rampage ([1 John 3:10-12](#)), John warns us **not to marvel if the world hates** us (v. 13).

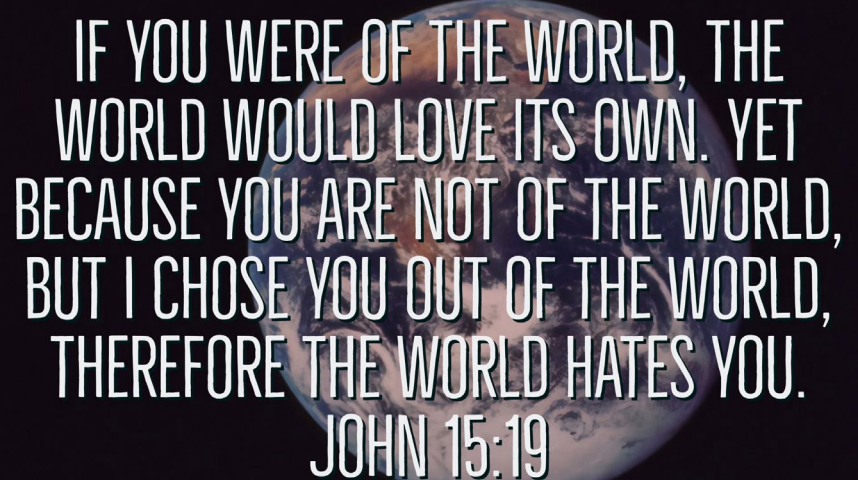
**The world** stands diametrically opposed to anything from God or to anyone who reflects His character in the transformed life he lives because they remain in darkness and don't want to have their sin exposed. Jesus warned His disciples of this very thing that both John and the church to whom he now writes are currently experiencing; therefore, He tells them, "If the world hates you, you know it hated Me before it hated you" ([John 15:18-25](#)). Like Cain, **the world** wants to rid themselves of any competition which makes them look bad, so they can justify their sinful choices and continue blissfully in sin unphased by the eternal consequences that await.

**The world** will naturally hate us when we imitate the righteousness of Christ without us even having to say anything! This doesn't mean that we don't have to share the gospel, speak the truth in love, or stand up for what is right in the midst of an evil generation. On the contrary, it means that we shouldn't give **the world** cause to hate us by acting arrogantly, legalistically, or hypocritically. When we act with integrity by representing Christ and upholding biblical principles, **the world** will inevitably hate

us. For example, some people may no longer want to associate with us and begin to mock us because we no longer tolerate or participate in the activities in which they engage—whether foul language or dirty jokes, gossip, drunkenness, watching explicit movies, or validating immoral sexual practices or a whole host of lifestyle choices. At times, persecution will also

come; in some areas, it can be violent and lead to death because human governments

and dictators see Christ as a threat or in other cases it can be more subtle in the form of



IF YOU WERE OF THE WORLD, THE  
WORLD WOULD LOVE ITS OWN. YET  
BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT OF THE WORLD,  
BUT I CHOSE YOU OUT OF THE WORLD,  
THEREFORE THE WORLD HATES YOU.  
JOHN 15:19

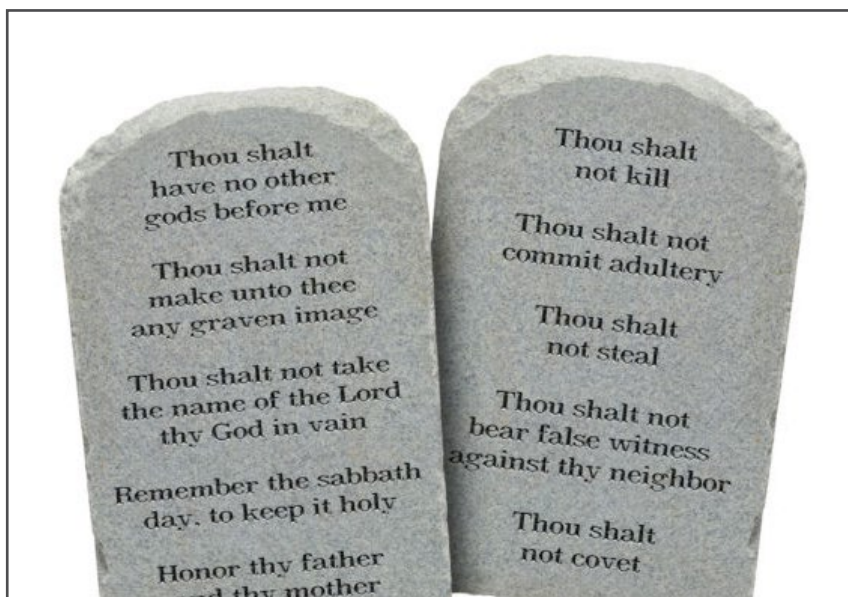
mockery, exclusion, the passing over for promotions, or limits set on freedom of speech to proclaim Christ.

How have you experienced the hatred of the world when living for Christ?

Question  
# 1

With **the world** defined by its hatred for the holy things which come from the Lord, believers in contrast are known by their **love** (v. 14). Evidence of the transformation **from death to life** exists when **we love the brethren** or fellow believers. Again, Jesus taught His disciples, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). We don’t **love** others because it leads to **life** and salvation; we **love** others because we have **life** and have been transformed to imitate our Savior! The **love** we have for others, therefore, clearly distinguishes us from the “children of the devil” ([1 John 3:1](#)) who do **not love** their **brother** and remain **in death**. John even identifies the one who **hates** his **brother** as **a murderer** and reminds us that **no murderer has eternal life abiding in him** (v. 15). Through this example, John isn’t arguing that **a murderer** can never receive salvation and **life** in Christ as if it were some unforgivable sin; if **a murderer** repents and submits to Christ, he can be saved! However, what John means is that one who continually hates and lives contrary to God’s Word and character is not His child and does not have **life**.

John’s equating of hatred with murder likely comes from an application of Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount where He clarifies the sixth commandment



which states, “You shall not murder” (Exod 20:13). In explaining the intention of the commandment, Jesus reveals, “Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause . . . and whoever says, “You fool!” shall be in danger of hell fire” ([Matt 5:22](#)). Just as Jesus taught, we shouldn’t view the law legalistically as a checklist; instead, we should seek to

understand its full intention as led by the Spirit. In Christ, we have a higher standard to

follow and He has sent His Holy Spirit to help us achieve it. Because we have a higher standard, we also need to set higher goals rather than mirroring **the world** around us. **The world** becomes angry over petty differences and not getting their way; they hold grudges and seek revenge, but rarely offer forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. As believers, however, we should always treat others as Christ did and does! At times, we will all become angry with someone and may even say things that we might regret, but the “children of God” do not continually live with such hatred and bitterness.

What is the danger of viewing the law legalistically like a checklist? Why do we as believers have an even higher standard that we ought to follow?

Question  
# 2

We don't have to look far to see anger, hatred, and violence on display; it has come to define **the world** in which we live. Unfortunately, this mentality of **the world** has crept into the church where anger and bitterness reign and push **love** aside. Many think selfishly or even see themselves as victims who have the right to lash out and express themselves in anger so others may notice and take pity. For others, it's about being “right” and finding people to agree with them rather than seeking the truth. What makes these emotions more prevalent and visible in our society is our technology, especially social media. As a society, we have come to accept outbursts of anger and temper tantrums as normal, regarding them as people simply speaking their mind. For believers, we should never engage in such activity whether in person or online. We may see no harm or even think we have the right to air our personal grievances online or even join in attacking others, but we have no excuse; we need to **love** others and resolve our differences in a biblical manner ([Matt 18:15-17](#)). The activities in which we participate online also influence and reveal the way we think and conduct ourselves offline which can affect our personal relationships.

How do dysfunctional relationships among believers cause problems for the church as a whole?

Question  
# 3

In the online world in which we live, we have lost the art of conversation because we can easily block or ghost (ignore) someone rather than have a meaningful dialogue, so we don't think much about the consequences of what we say or post. We find it much easier to gossip, attack others, and say mean-spirited things that we would never say in

## Instruct

person because we don't have to see the pain upon the other person's face caused by our choice of words or our actions when we hide behind a screen. Yet, these bad habits that we've learned online carry over into our personal relationships. People often become demanding, dismissive, and demeaning; they say whatever comes to mind without thinking about the consequences and refuse to have meaningful dialogues that seek to repair broken relationships. We must remember that we can never take back hurtful words we say in anger; we must always choose words that edify and build even though they may express the truth in a difficult circumstance.

Why must we be careful about what we post or say online—even if we have good intentions in the way we say something?

Question  
# 4

## 1 John 3:16-17

### RECOGNIZE THE DEPTHS OF HIS LOVE:

To **know** how to **love**, we must first recognize the greatest example of **love** found in Christ, so that we can imitate it in our own lives! Christ demonstrated the depths of His **love** by laying **down His life for us** (v. 16). In fact, Jesus Himself reiterates, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jesus' **love** even supersedes that kind of amazing **love** because He died for us while we were still sinners and His enemies ([Rom 5:8-11](#)). We didn't seek Him on our own; we

For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, *much more* we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled.

ROMANS 5:10

rebelled against Him and didn't **love** Him, but He still sought a relationship with us! He wanted that relationship with us so much that He willingly died in our place. Perhaps, we can think of several examples where people, whether a parent, first responder, or an ordinary bystander, gave their lives to protect or rescue someone; in some cases, they may not have

even known the person for whom they perished. However, no person has ever given his life knowingly to rescue a person known to be "wicked." Only Christ has!



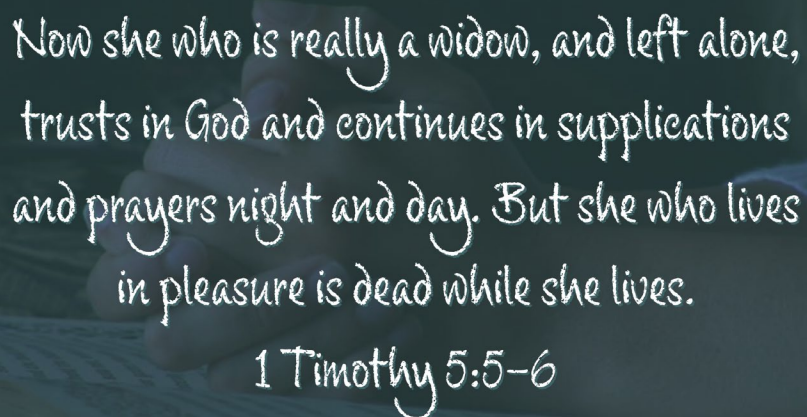
With Christ transforming us from death to life, we ought to display that same kind of **love** to others in the church. Therefore, John reminds us that **we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren**. John doesn't mean that we can "save" people by proxy or even that we must seek to endanger our lives to help others. Rather, we must simply exercise the same type of sacrificial **love** that Christ has shown us. In verse 17, John gives us a tangible example of what this type of sacrificial **love** entails. If someone in the church (**his brother**) has a **need** and we have the capacity to help (**has the world's goods**), then we should assist them lovingly. If we callously ignore them and shut up our **heart**, then how does this show **the love of God** abiding in us?

To apply this principle of sacrificial **love** properly, we must understand both the immediate and broader biblical context. In the immediate context, John speaks about helping members of the church who may have an urgent **need** that arises. We find this principle in [Acts 2:44-45](#) where the church in Jerusalem pooled their resources and helped believers as they had **need**; we also see the churches in Macedonia collecting resources to minister to the church in Jerusalem during a time of famine ([2 Cor 8-9](#)). This doesn't mean that we can't or shouldn't minister to unbelievers or those outside of the church who need assistance, but that ministering to fellow believers becomes a priority for the community. When the world sees this kind of sacrificial **love** demonstrated amongst believers, they will know it supernaturally comes from God.

In what ways can we show love by meeting needs in the church (not just monetarily)?

Question  
# 5

Overall, the Bible calls us to be good stewards—not miserly—of the resources with which God has entrusted us. To exercise good stewardship means that we do our due diligence to determine if it's a legitimate need rather than simply an opportunity to squander money for pleasure or to live beyond their means. Paul, for example, makes this distinction in 1 Timothy 5:5 when he gives boundaries for assisting widows in the community. Moreover, it's



Now she who is really a widow, and left alone,  
trusts in God and continues in supplications  
and prayers night and day. But she who lives  
in pleasure is dead while she lives.  
1 Timothy 5:5-6

## Instruct

not loving to throw money or resources at a problem to enable people to live a sinful lifestyle or to live impoverished when they have ability to work and make a living for themselves ([2 Thess 3:10](#)). If we are indiscriminate with our resources, then when a legitimate need arises we may not have the ability to help!

Why should we exercise discernment when assisting other people? What danger is there in creating a sense of entitlement in the community?

Question  
# 6

## 1 John 3:18-21

### REVEAL LOVE IN OUR ACTIONS:

Having cited the greatest example of **love** found in Christ, John now challenges us to reveal that **love** in our actions. He urges us **not to love in word or tongue only, but in deed and truth** (v. 19). Undoubtedly, we should verbally tell others that we **love** them, but we must also show them! To **love in truth**, therefore, means that we won't say one thing and do another; we won't tell people that we **love** them and then not show it! More importantly, this supernatural **love** evidenced in our actions proves that we belong to God and have a relationship with Him. For this reason, John affirms **by this love we will know that we are of the truth** and it **assures our hearts before Him**.

When we show **love** by meeting the needs of others, we can have assurance that

**Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.**  
**2 Corinthians 5:11**

we are children of God. John, therefore, explains that **if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things** (v. 20). In other words, if we say we have the **love** of God in us and don't show it through our actions, then we stand condemned as liars who don't speak the truth. We may be able to fool others outwardly, but we can't

fool God who knows **our heart**. He sees our hidden motives and knows our inner-most thoughts! If we don't show **love**, then we don't belong to Him even if we say it. On the

other hand, **if our heart does not condemn us**, then we can **have confidence toward God** (v. 21). Hence, when we say we have **love** and show it, we can know for certain that we are His children!

In Christ, we put **love** in action when we encourage, comfort, forgive, serve, listen, help, and nurture fellow believers. In our church, we have many people who hear a need and compassionately respond in **love** without wanting recognition or thanks. Through just a cursory examination of our congregation, we can get an idea about how much we **love** one another when we look at what God has done through our membership! For example, someone heard about the struggle of a member to go San Antonio to visit family and took time to drive her for a visit. Moreover, we have many who have cooked or bought meals for families who are bereaved or members with chronic health problems. Others visit or write cards to families or members who need comfort. In order to facilitate ministry and equip our members to reach the community, people have bought Bibles to distribute to elementary and pre-school students through the children's ministry or have given to projects which help provide resources to reach youth at a local skate park. We have members who give of their resources, so pre-teens and youth can attend camp every summer to hear the gospel! We are blessed with a church family that shows their **love** for Christ and one another. Let us individually evaluate how we partner with others in our church to demonstrate love and put **love** in action!

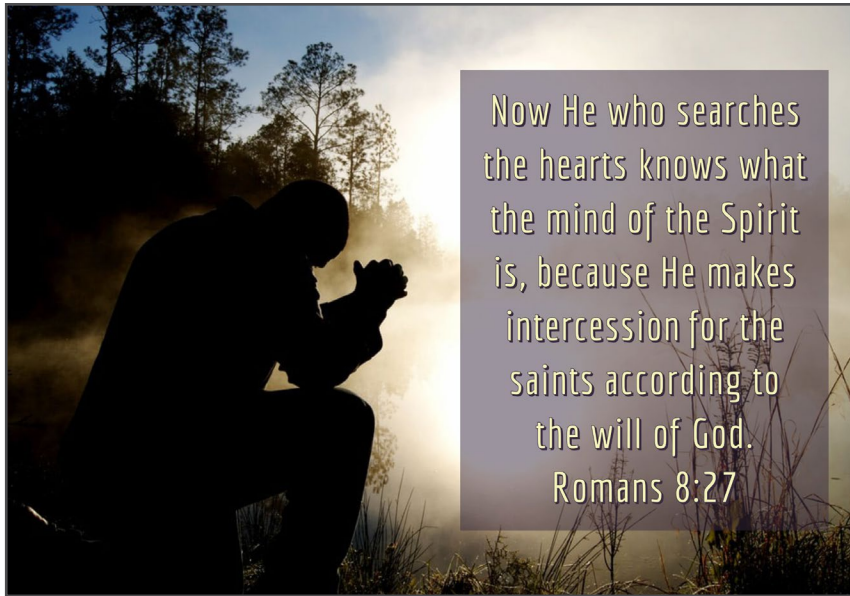
How have people in your life shown that they love you? How do you show people that you love them?

Question  
# 7

## **1 John 3:22-24**

### **RENDER LOVE IN OBEDIENCE:**

Finally, John concludes this section of teaching by detailing how we show our **love** to God through our obedience. Throughout these three verses, he emphasizes keeping **His commandments**. When we keep **His commandments**, we will **do those things that are pleasing in His sight** (v. 22). It's in this context that we must understand the phrase **whatever we ask we receive from Him**. Many people, however, attempt to take this phrase out of context without reading the entire verse and passage; they wrongly assert that we can **ask** anything from God, usually some type of physical or financial request, from an earthly perspective and He will grant it to us as if He were



a “genie.” On the contrary, John clearly notes that we will **ask** in obedience according to His will what He desires of us when we pray; we shouldn’t selfishly or narcissistically **ask** for things according to our human desires. Furthermore, John attests that the one **who** obeys **His commandments abides in Him and He in him**; we can **know** that

we belong to Him and abide in Him because of **the Spirit whom He has given us** (v. 24). The **Spirit**, therefore, helps us to fulfill the righteous principles by which God has called us to live ([Rom 8:4-7](#)) as well as to know how we ought to pray and communicate with Him ([Rom 8:26](#)). When we submit to the Holy **Spirit**, He directs us to seek the desires of the Lord; at salvation when the Holy **Spirit** comes to reside in our hearts, He begins to transform our desires from a human perspective and conform them to Christ. Therefore, we can then state like Christ, “Not my will, but Yours, be done” ([Luke 22:42](#)). In this passage, we can clearly see God’s will for us that **we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ** and we ought to **love one another** (v. 23).

How do you express your obedience to the Lord?  
Why can we not surrender some areas to the Lord and not others and claim that we’re being obedient to Him?

Question  
# 8

What does God want most from us? He desires us to express our **love** through obedience which means that we represent His character by loving others. This doesn’t mean that we tolerate sin or remain silent in the face of immorality or doctrinal error, but that we **love** each other enough to point one another to Christ as the embodiment of God’s **love**. Let us as believers conformed to His image practice the same kind of sacrificial **love** that he has shown us. Therefore, let us show unconditional **love** by meeting other’s needs in a biblical way that honors the Lord, so that the world around us can see Christ manifested in us!

When we recognize God's great love for us through Christ, it will cause us to love others authentically. We won't boast that we love others through meaningless talk, but we will show others that we love them. We will put love into action! Just as we saw in the introduction, Mitchell and Claire verbally expressed love and commitment, but they also demonstrated it by being willing to suffer from arthritic pain to serve and help one another when they needed it most. They could practice this kind of love because Christ was the center and priority of their relationship. When we fail to make Christ the priority, our concept of love tends to become self-serving and emotionally-driven by circumstances rather than a constant state of being—that is who we have become in Christ.

In a fallen world, we can easily fall into the trap of adopting the cultural mindset if we don't guard our hearts and minds with the gospel of Jesus Christ. By His example, we can know what true love is; we ought to measure our actions according to the standard that He has perfectly set for us to follow. This week as we conclude this study prayerfully ask God what He desires of you as you serve Him and show His love to others. Let us honestly examine ourselves and ask: Does the love of Christ reside in me? Do I love others as much as Christ loves me? If we don't, let us seek the Lord and ask Him to transform us to His image. If we do, let us prayerfully ask the Lord to give us the strength to continue to love others just as He Himself loves us.

## ***Incorporate***

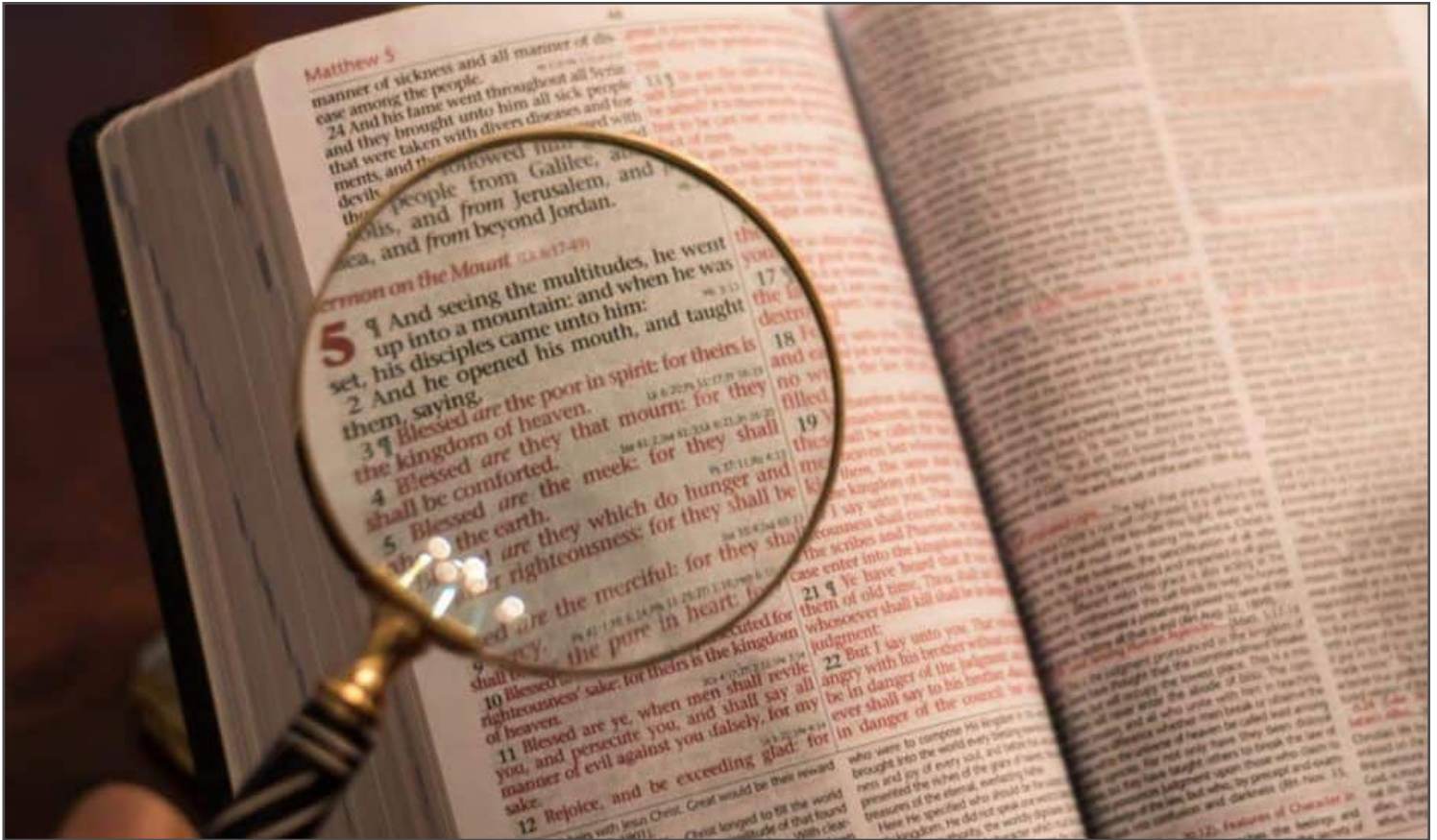
How has the mentality of the secular culture affected relationships within the church? How can and should we keep from being influenced by the culture in our relationships?

How has Christ shown you love? How can we show that same love to the culture around us?

What does genuine love for Christ look like? How should that genuine love be reflected in our relationships with others in the church?

## ***Journal: Document God's Work***

March 22, 2020



# Receive the Truth

## 1 John 4:1-6

Focal Verse:

“We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

1 John 4:6

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## Introduce

Many of us probably have a favorite courtroom or crime drama that we like to watch regularly. Typically, these shows operate under the same guiding principle whereby the main characters attempt to ascertain the truth by examining evidence and interviewing key eyewitnesses. As in real-life situations, these shows follow a particular pattern in how they analyze data—albeit it with an entertaining twist usually. First, they begin by collecting physical evidence at the crime scene, whether surveillance footage, fingerprints, DNA, or anything else pertinent to the case. Second, and sometimes simultaneously, they interview eyewitnesses. While taking the eyewitnesses' statements, they generally isolate them to avoid any inadvertent influence that their testimony may have on those who observed the incident. Then, they corroborate their statements with the physical evidence to determine their accuracy and validity. They don't simply take the word of the eyewitnesses at face value even though their testimony often proves reliable!



After gathering the evidence from the scene, they formulate a list of suspects who had the motive, means, and opportunity to commit the crime. From this list, they call all the possible suspects to hear their side of the story. During the process of interrogation, investigators will ask the same questions repeatedly in different ways in order to see if a suspect's testimony changes or has any inconsistency. In some cases, they ask seemingly irrelevant questions to see if the distraction will cause the suspect to lose focus and inadvertently mix up his story. Only after all the evidence is gathered and assessed do the investigators file charges against an individual. In a perfect world, no one would rush to draw hasty conclusions without considering all the facts of the case carefully. Ideally, people should withhold judgment until they have heard all the facts and examined all the evidence. They wouldn't base their conclusions upon personal preference, public opinion, or first impressions; they would hear the evidence!

In [1 John 4:1-6](#), the Lord calls us to be investigators led by the Holy Spirit who look at

## Introduce

all the evidence to determine the truth. We shouldn't merely trust what others say and take it at face value, but instead we must test it to see if what they have spoken has indeed come from the Lord. For this reason, John warns, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God" ([1 John 4:1](#)). Because we live in a world with many "false prophets" who espouse their own opinions, we need to test what they say against the clear evidence we find in Scripture. We must reject anyone's belief or opinion if it contradicts God's Word no matter how good or valid it may seem because in the end its deception only leads to destruction.

Although the world may urge us to practice tolerance and acceptance of other people's views by affirming their validity, we cannot succumb to such deception at the expense of disregarding the truth which the Lord has revealed from the foundation of the world in His holiness and righteousness. As believers, we must be gracious and loving in our response, but we must continue to stand firm on the truth and not waver at all! In both crime dramas and real-life trials, humans can sometimes misinterpret and misunderstand the evidence, making wrong decisions. However, we can't afford to make such gaffs in Christ who has given us His Spirit so we can know the truth. Thus, John reminds us, "We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" ([1 John 4:6](#)). Therefore, let us carefully receive the truth from the Lord and reject anything that doesn't match His character and His Word found in Scripture.

Key  
Question

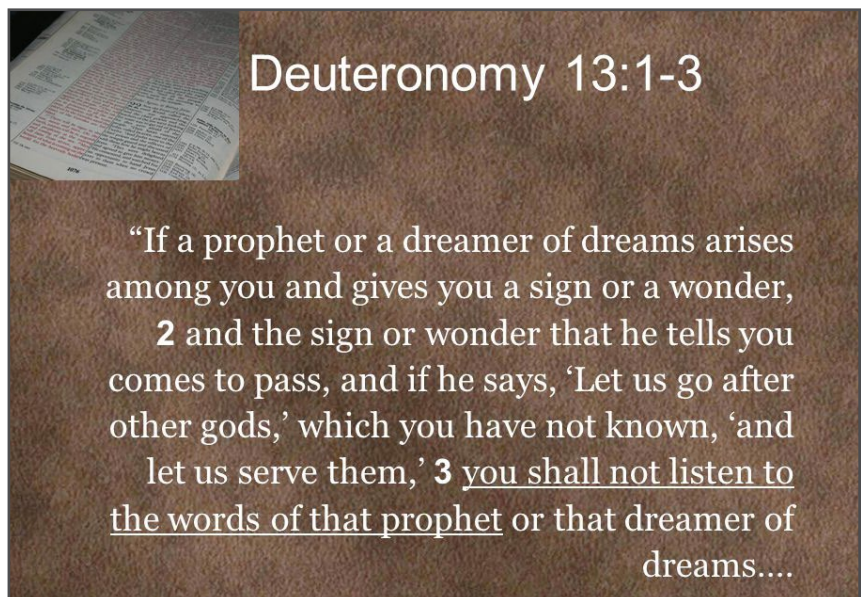
How does God help us to evaluate and know the truth?

## 1 John 4:1

### TEST TO DISCERN THE TRUTH:

John transitions to a new subject by admonishing his **beloved** readers **not** to **believe every spirit, but** to **test** them to see if their message is **of God** (v. 1). We must carefully **test** their message **because many false prophets have gone out into the world**. We shouldn't be naïve or gullible as followers of Christ, but we must recognize that the enemy wants to distract and deceive us from knowing and following the will of God ([John 3:22-24](#)). We may sometimes hear people talk about "blind faith" with respect to God. God indeed wants us to trust Him, but not "blindly"; He always gives us clear boundaries and provides evidence that the information truly comes from Him. He will never contradict His character or His Word! We shouldn't "put" God to the **test** by acting stubbornly or unfaithfully ([Deut 6:16](#)), but we should **test** or conform the validity or truthfulness of information.

Because God wants us to know and discern the truth, He has even given us boundaries by which to **test** it. In fact, He wants us to **test** it and not just trust it lest we become deceived. First, whatever a person says or teaches and attributes to the Lord must come to pass ([Deut 18:22](#)). Second, it must not contradict God's written Word which contains all His revelation that we need; He will not add to or change His Word, so we can use it to **test** what people say ([Deut 13:1-5](#)). This second principle really lies at the heart of what John's audience faces here; these false teachers reject the idea that Jesus physically came in the flesh and dispute His identity as the Messiah through whom salvation comes ([1 Cor 12:1-3](#)). If they aren't careful about what they believe, any of these erroneous ideas can derail their faith.



Why is testing the truthfulness or validity of a message not testing the Lord?

Question  
# 1

## Instruct

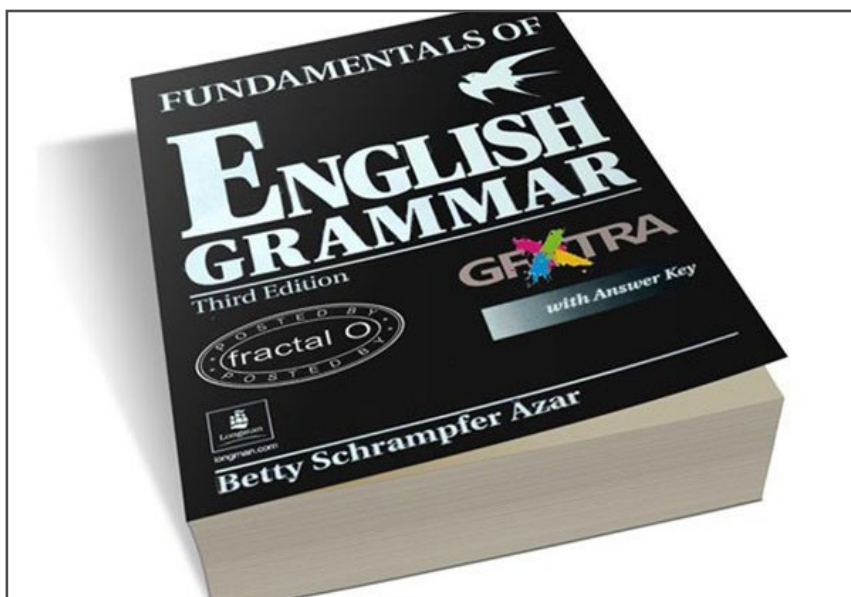
Several weeks ago on an App called Nextdoor where people post information pertinent to local neighborhoods, a woman related a story about bumping into her friend at the grocery store when she happened to notice the staggering number of gift cards she intended to buy. Seeing her purchase as odd, the woman inquired why she needed so many gift cards. So, the friend began to explain how she had received a voicemail from an unfamiliar phone number claiming to be from a large, well-known cable company. The message gave contact information where she could reach the “company” to find out more about a sensational deal that would potentially save her lots of money. Using the number from the voicemail, the woman called and the person on the other end of the line told her that she could lock in these tremendous rates by paying a full month in advance with gift cards. This should have been a red flag; commonsense should have told her that no legitimate company accepts payments in gift cards! Also, she simply trusted the message without validating it. She didn’t go to a known website or obtain a reputable phone number to the actual company to investigate the claim of the caller! Unfortunately, many believers wander through life unaware like the woman in this example; fortunately, for her, she had a friend who was concerned enough to ask and point her in the right direction before she was scammed out of her money. In order to **test the spirits** effectively and recognize error, we need to do the following three things in this order. First, we must have a right relationship with the Lord where we have confessed our sins and allowed Him to cleanse us, so that our sins and personal desires don’t cloud our judgment. Naturally, we will then submit to the leadership of the Spirit (see vv. 4-6). Second, we need to pray and study Scripture daily, so we can know its contents. We can’t discern the truth if we don’t know what is true! Third, we need to meet regularly for corporate Bible study in the church whereby we mature together and hold one another accountable to God’s Word ([Acts 2:42](#); [2 Peter 1:19-21](#)).

Why is it important to meet regularly with other believers so that we can study God’s Word together rather than *only* studying on our own?

Question  
# 2

In order to distinguish the truth of the Lord from counterfeit teaching, we must first know the real thing—that is we must know the truth in Scripture. During the many years I taught college, I noticed that students whose native language was English had a harder time writing in proper grammar than foreign students who learned English as

a second language. American students often wrote like they talked; they had grown up and surrounded themselves with people who shared their love for bad grammar, so when it came to writing correctly the bad grammar sounded right! On the other hand, those who learned English as a second language studied vocabulary and books that contained all the grammatical rules for speaking and writing properly. They knew what a proper sentence



should look like because they knew the right form! Discerning truth in life is the same way. We need to know Scripture lest we become too familiar and casual with the culture that a lie sounds like the truth and we can't even recognize the difference.

### **1 John 4:2-3**

#### **TRUST THE SPIRIT OF GOD ALONE:**

After exhorting us to **test the spirits**, John now clearly delineates how we can **know** the truth which comes from **the Spirit of God** (v. 2). He points out that **every spirit** which **confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God**. However, those who reject this fact are **not of God** (v. 3). In fact, John goes so far as to say those who deny the physical nature of Christ share **the spirit of the antichrist** whom they **have heard was coming and is already now in the world**. To have **the spirit of the antichrist** in this context means that they have the same mindset or think alike; it doesn't mean that they are demonically possessed or satanically controlled in that sense. Like **the antichrist**, they are misguided and deceived in their beliefs. Moreover, **the antichrist** can **already** have been said to be **in the world** because he represents anyone opposed to salvation in Jesus the Christ (Messiah) who is the only way to have a restored relationship with the Father in heaven!

How does the world attempt to deceive us about the person of Christ and His role in salvation?

Question  
# 3

Just as in John's day, we can easily observe a number of errant beliefs about Jesus / God

not only from the secular society around us, but sometimes from those who profess



to have a “religious” background. For instance, the quarterback for the Green Bay Packers, Aaron Rodgers, recently pondered in a podcast, “I don’t know how you can believe in a God who wants to condemn most of the planet to a fiery hell . . . What type of loving, sensitive, omnipresent, omnipotent being wants to condemn his beautiful creation to a

fiery hell at the end of all this?” Many people share this misguided belief with Rodgers; perhaps, we’ve heard it stated this way: a loving God wouldn’t send people to hell. Simply put, this deception attempts to distract people from believing in God at all or wrongly surmising that He won’t punish anyone because He loves everyone. God does indeed love everyone because He sent His one and only Son to save us!

However, He doesn’t condemn people to hell, but provides a way of escape through His Son who died in our place. People condemn themselves, therefore, when they choose to reject God’s plan and gift. If one reads Scripture, Jesus makes this abundantly clear when He tells Nicodemus, “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17). He continues to state that the world faces condemnation by its own choice because they have rejected the true Light and chosen to live in darkness by willingly participating in sin (John 3:18-21). A human judge, for example, doesn’t condemn criminals or wrongdoers, but merely sentences them based on the choices they have made. Likewise, God doesn’t send people to hell, but He sentences them according to the choice they have made to continue in sin and reject His offer of salvation!

### In Reference



Melissa Roberto, [“Aaron Rodgers’ Family ‘Dismayed’ by his Religious Comments on Danica Patrick’s Podcast: Report,”](https://www.foxnews.com/story/2020/01/23/aaron-rodgers-family-dismayed-by-his-religious-comments-on-danica-patrick-podcast-report) [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com) (January 23, 2020).

In addition, many people claim in the name of tolerance and uniformity that we all truly serve the same “god,” but we call Him by different names, whether Muslim, Mormon, Jehovah’s Witnesses, or any other cult. We clearly do not worship the same God

because these cults reject the deity of Christ and add a human element, particularly good works, to salvation. They teach that we don't need Christ as means for salvation, but we can earn it—a direct violation of Scripture ([Eph 2:8-9](#))! Furthermore, Jesus is not merely a good prophet and teacher as Islam claims nor did He exist merely as a human who became a divine being as Jehovah's Witnesses attest. On the other hand, the Mormons wrongly assert that Jesus was the first created being, misunderstanding the force of the idea behind the phrase "firstborn" of all creation! Scripture makes it clear that this refers to His status as sovereign over all creation rather than the literal understanding that He was the first "person" created ([Col 1:15-17](#)).

As we know from Scripture, Jesus has always existed as God even before the world and time came into existence ([John 1:1-4](#)). He never became God at any point during or after the creation of the world nor did He cease to be God during His earthly sojourn in the first century. He was, is, and will always be God without interruption through which the divine plan to save mankind and restore creation was executed! When Jesus became flesh and dwelt among His creation, He didn't cease to become God, but rather He made Himself fully man at the same time. In other words, He existed as 100% God and 100% man at the same time as Scripture reveals. Any cult or religion that denies His humanity, His divinity, His pre-existence, or His unique role in saving mankind through His death and resurrection does not worship and serve the same God! Instead, they have made God a liar and His Word errant which is exactly the point John makes in these verses and why we ought to test every belief and statement we encounter. For this reason, we must **test** everything according to the Scripture which we know to be true rather than trusting the logic and opinion of other mere mortals.



How should we respond to these errant teachings about Christ and His work?

Question  
# 4

We can find errant theology not only about the person and salvific work of Christ, but

## Instruct

also about how He has told us to live and practice righteousness. Even the Apostle Paul faced such misguided practices when writing to the Romans. Today, some believe that it doesn't matter how we live; we can continue to sin and God will graciously forgive us. In essence, they knowingly confess they have sinned, but there is no remorse or repentance. They simply continue to sin, abusing grace! God will forgive any and every sin, but this doesn't give us a license to sin! On the contrary, as we have seen from this very letter ([1 John 3:6](#)), John encourages us to live above sin and conduct ourselves in righteousness. In [Romans 6](#), Paul explains that we shouldn't continue willfully to live a lifestyle of sin so that grace may abound; in the strongest terms possible, he interjects, "May that never be!" In Christ, we have been both transformed and called to walk in a new way that represents the holiness of God!

In what other ways does the world distort the teaching of Scripture / Jesus?

Question  
# 5

We live in a culture that has made truth "relevant" to their situation and rejected the existence of absolute truth. However, we need a fixed standard of truth that doesn't change with circumstances or opinions. If we don't have a fixed or objective standard of truth by which to **test** ideas and philosophies, it throws society into complete chaos—and we can see the results of that chaos now! As believers, we have that fixed standard by which we can **test** the validity and truthfulness of everything: Christ and His Word (Scripture). Therefore, we have no excuse to fail to know what to believe and how to live because God has given us everything we need in Scripture. Let us **test** everything we hear and see by Scripture, so that we may not be deceived by the world or follow our own desires; let us follow Christ and His example that He set in His Word!

### 1 John 4:4-6

#### **TURN FROM THE DECEPTION OF THE WORLD:**

John concludes his warning to test the authenticity or truthfulness of every statement by encouraging his readers that God has given them everything they need. As children **of God** and members of His household, they **have overcome** the deceptions of the world **because He who is in** them (and us) **is greater than he who is in the world** (v. 4). The way John writes the word **overcome** in the Greek means that the victory has already been won and the results of that victory are continuing to be felt! In this



context, **overcome** refers to the ability to know the **truth**; it does not mean that we **overcome** difficult times or problems in our lives. God does certainly help us to **overcome** hardships, but we have this victory over **the world** because He has given us spiritual insight through our relationship with Him by which we can distinguish **truth** from **error** (v. 6). **The world**, on the other hand, cannot understand this spiritual insight because they have rejected Christ; therefore, they can only **speak** and hear the errant things of **the secular world** around them (v. 5).



How does Christ help us to overcome deception and even strengthen us to resist the temptation not to participate in the things this world has to offer?

Question # 6

The phrase **He who is in you** refers to **the Spirit of God** mentioned in verse 2 who has come to indwell our hearts as believers and keep us on the right path. The **Spirit** isn't our "conscience," but rather He aligns our consciences with God's will by helping us to discern the **truth** and practice it. Apart from the **Spirit**, our consciences become corrupted where we exhibit selfish motives and can't distinguish the **truth** from **error** even though from time to time we may do what is right or good ([1 Tim 4:1-2](#)). The **Spirit of God** helps us to **overcome** the deceptive practices and beliefs of the world in three primary ways.

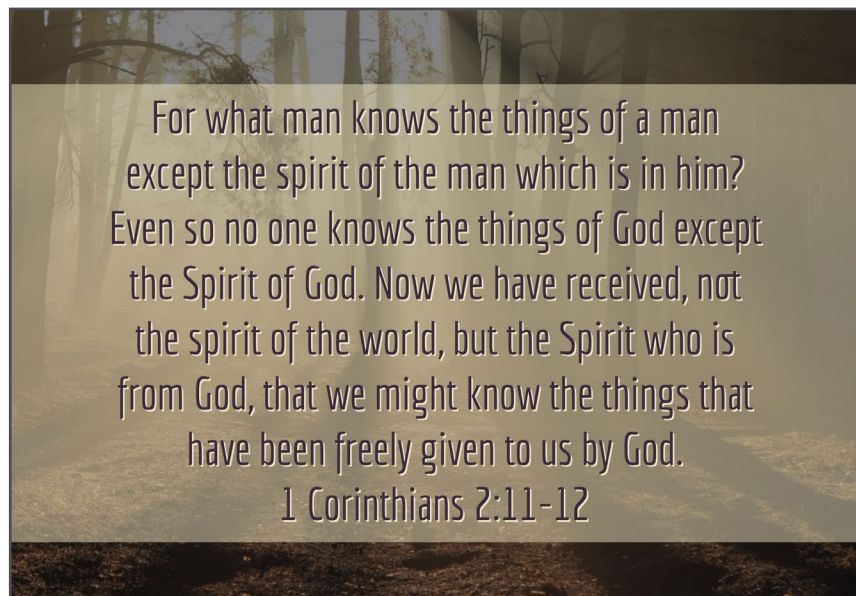
First, He reminds us of Jesus' teaching ([John 14:26](#)) and gives us insight into the proper interpretation of Scripture ([2 Peter 1:19-21](#)). In other words, He helps us to know and apply the content of **truth**! This does, however, require effort on our part to study diligently and daily; it doesn't just happen. We need to **test** everything we hear in Bible study (including this lesson), in small groups, in worship, among friends, and on television according to God's Word. If we don't invest in knowing the content of God's Word, the Spirit can't help us to "recall" what we haven't studied; it would be like

guessing on an exam in school.

How has the Spirit given you insight into the application of God's Word when faced with errant theologies or practices?

Question  
# 7

Second, the Holy **Spirit** convicts us when we err and keeps us on the right path, so we don't stumble by giving in to temptation and sinning. He doesn't leave us guessing or



confused about the morality of an issue when we submit to Him. In a culture that has trouble discerning right from wrong, He enables us to know the mind of Christ and practice righteousness; through Him, we know the standard we ought to follow in our lives ([1 Cor 2:11-12](#))! Third, the **Spirit** enables us to view things from a comprehensive perspective since

He is omniscient whereas we only have limited knowledge and can misunderstand and misjudge situations very easily. Without Him, we tend to jump to conclusions and make spontaneous decisions based upon opinion because we don't have all the facts or the vision to analyze the circumstances properly. Therefore, we desperately need His insight, so that we can properly assess situations, discern how to respond appropriately, and make godly decisions based on His Word.

How does the Spirit help us to know right from wrong when society may debate about the morality of an action?

Question  
# 8

As believers, let us stand firm on the **truth** of the Lord in the midst of a hostile and misinformed culture which is blinded to these spiritual truths. We live in a culture that has become like those in [Isaiah 5:20](#) which calls evil good and good evil. Therefore, let us not compromise our faith by practicing the errors of this world by rejecting the transformative work of Christ and continually living a lifestyle of sin. Even if we experience persecution, hardship, and ridicule now, we have already **overcome**

because we have a relationship with Christ and we know the **truth**. May we then continue to be overcomers who have defeated deception by speaking the **truth** in love which God has clearly revealed in Scripture.

In the introduction, we learned how some popular crime dramas investigate every avenue to determine the truth; they usually leave no stone unturned, using every available resource to draw a logical and (hopefully) accurate conclusion. When it comes to spiritual matters, do we exercise the same amount of effort to determine the truthfulness of a statement or belief or do we merely take it at face value and believe that everyone is entitled to his own opinion? As believers, we need to test everything we hear, see, and experience to determine whether it comes from God or is an error that merely sounds good to the rest of the world because they can't understand the truth. Anything that does not come from God and contradicts His Word needs to be removed from our lives, so that we can maintain purity in our practices.

As His children, God has equipped us with everything we need to receive the truth and reject error. He has given us His complete revelation in His Word which becomes the sole standard by which we judge everything. He has instilled His Spirit within our hearts, so that He can help us know how to apply Scripture and abide by its principles. Therefore, we have no excuse for being deceived and believing error; it's by our own choice and laziness rather than ignorance! Consequently, let us seek the Lord, allow Him to guide, and receive His truth so that we can apply it in our lives and honor Him.

## ***Incorporate***

How can the church more effectively equip people to discern the truth in a culture of lies? What is the individual believer's responsibility as well?

What cultural errors or practices have crept into the church today? How should we take steps to eradicate these practices while helping believers to mature?

How does the Spirit help us to collectively overcome error? Why is it important that we meet together regularly to study God's Word?

*March 29, 2020*



# *Reciprocate Love*

## *1 John 4:7-11*

Focal Verse:

*"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."*

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1 John 4:11

## Introduce

As the proprietor of a successful tour company based in Alexandria, Egypt, Abdul Meer Raj enjoyed personally accompanying his tour groups to show them the beautiful and historic sights of his homeland. On one tour, he programmed the autopilot of the small plane he owned, so that as he flew along the Nile and over the pyramids he could focus on interacting with the guests, narrating and answering questions.

On this trip, however, something in the onboard computer system went haywire and the plane flew off course into the middle of the uninhabited Sahara Desert.

Running low on fuel, Abdul Meer Raj safely landed the plane in a sand dune with no sign of life for miles on end. No longer did the



group see trees and strips of green vegetation along the Nile River, but only the tan sand dunes that seemed to shift in the scorching breeze.

Gathering what they could carry, the stranded group set out in the direction they thought was east and would lead them back to the Nile and civilization. As they began to walk, the sun beat endlessly upon them with no clouds in the sky to give any relief. Streaks of heat visibly rose from the sand that baked in the sun. Suddenly, one of the tourists called out, "Look, palm trees and vegetation. There must be water at this oasis!" Meer Raj quickly changed directions and led the group straight toward this welcomed sight. Yet, they walked and walked for what seemed like hours, but they never arrived. The sight of the oasis always beckoned them to push forward. Having lived in Egypt all his life, Meer Raj soon discerned what had happened. Their eyes had been fooled; they only saw a mirage that had given them a false sense of hope. They had become delirious in the heat and could no longer distinguish the truth of reality from the deception of their eyes.

Apart from a transformed relationship with Christ, we cannot truly understand the concept of love. The world may foolishly think they know what love is, but in reality it is only a mirage which they can never actually attain without intimately knowing Christ. The world places a premium on the physical aspects of love and beauty which for the

## Introduce

most part do not last or satisfy. Love, therefore, becomes an emotion which changes arbitrarily based upon feeling. People fall in and out of love as often as they change their clothes! For this reason, they continually seek a love that will satisfy their longings and meet their needs. Although some may find “love” in life according to human understanding, they can never fully comprehend what it means to love unconditionally, sacrificially, and selflessly.

Thankfully, God has provided the quintessential picture of love, so that we can understand it and apply it in our own lives and relationships. To God, love isn’t an emotion that changes, but rather it is a state of existence that remains forever constant! Love is God’s character. Even when we perform sinful deeds against His holy character, He continues to love us and provide a way for restoration even though He detests our unfaithful acts. In this way, God has demonstrated His very love for us ([1 John 4:9](#)). Thus, God shows us how to love unconditionally, sacrificially, and selflessly. If we have a relationship with Him, therefore, we need to reciprocate His love to Him as well as show it to others. For this reason, John implores us, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11).

Key  
Question

How does the world view love in comparison to how God views it?



### 1 John 4:7-8

#### **GOD'S CHARACTER REVEALED IN LOVE:**

When studying Scripture comprehensively and systematically, we will begin to see many repetitive themes appear; this letter is no different. Perhaps, some of us may have grown weary and want to move on to a different subject because we've talked so much about **love** already in our study of 1 John. Some may have even uttered a sigh saying, "Here we go again!" We live in a society always looking for new and exciting fads, but we must continually remind ourselves of timeless truths that never become outdated. God inspired His human authors to repeat subjects such as these for a reason: they're important! If it's important enough for God to repeat, then it's important enough for us to continue to study, so that we can apply these principles in our lives to our relationships.

John begins this new section of his letter with a command to **love one another** which he repeats in [verse 11](#), so we'll focus more on this imperative when we get there. Here, however, we'll concentrate on the reason why we should **love** (v. 7). We should **love**

each other because God has called us to reflect His character in how we relate to Him and others. Although we could describe God's character with words like holy, righteous, and just, **love** captures the very essence of His being and governs everything He does. "For God so loved the world," really says it all ([John 3:16](#))! Therefore, John explains that **love is of God** and **everyone who practices love is**

**born of God and knows** Him. If we have a relationship with Christ (i.e. **born of God**), then we ought to exist in a state of **love**; **love** ought to define who we have become in Him!

In the next two verses, John distinguishes between the source for *comprehending love* and the source of *confusion* about **love**. First, we learn that God is the source of



## Instruct

**love.** **Love** originates with Him! Apart from Him, we only have a tainted view of what it means to love. When John pens that **God is love**, he is speaking about the state in which God exists. **Love** is God's nature and character; it defines who He is! In order to comprehend what it means to love, we ought to look to God who has set the perfect example. Through God's example, we can know with absolute certainty what **love** entails. Although we cannot exhaustively define God's **love** in this brief setting, we can identify five characteristics that best describe the **love** He extends to us: 1) concern for our needs, 2) comfort / compassion, 3) cultivation for growth, 4) correction / conviction, and 5) confidence / completeness.

As the pinnacle of His creation, God loves us so much that He demonstrates great care and concern for both our physical and spiritual needs. He invites us to communicate our daily needs with Him ([Matt 6:11](#)), urges us to trust that He will meet our basic physical needs when we seek Him first ([Matt 6:30-34](#)), and has provided the only way that we can overcome sin and have eternal life ([John 14:6](#)). Moreover, He extends compassion by reconciling the lost world to Himself ([Matt 9:36](#)), willingly forgiving sin ([Rom 11:30-31](#)), faithfully fulfilling His promises ([Luke 1:72](#)), and serving others by meeting their needs ([Matt 14:14](#); [Mark 8:2](#)). He further gives us comfort during times of distress ([2 Cor 1:3-4](#)).

How has God demonstrated His compassion and comfort toward you?

Question  
# 1

God also displays His **love** toward us by cultivating our faith to produce spiritual



**Be imitators of God as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

- Ephesians 5:1-2 -

maturity. He cultivates our faith through His Word ([Deut 11:18-21](#)), by sending His Spirit to guide, teach, and give us discernment ([Luke 12:12](#); [John 16:31](#); [Ezek 36:27](#)), and equipping His servants to assist others in their personal growth ([1 Thess 2:7-12](#); [2 Tim 1:5](#); [Titus 1:9](#)). Although we may not like to hear or think about it, God shows His **love** for us through

conviction of sin and correction (discipline). Not only does God advise us to discipline our own children in **love** ([Prov 13:24](#)), but He Himself also exhibits **love** in disciplining wayward churches ([Rev 3:19](#)) and individuals ([Heb 12:5-11](#)). Finally, God's **love** grants us confidence toward Him and completely satisfies our every longing. Thus, John can write, "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world" ([1 John 4:17](#)).

On the other hand, through Christ's example we can also comprehend what **love** is *not*. God's **love** is not conditional and based upon what we do, it's not contingent upon circumstances, and it does not change. God doesn't view **love** from a human perspective which typically places conditions: if you do x, then I'll do y. Consequently, God does not say, "If you love Me, then I'll love you in return." On the contrary, God exclaims, "If you don't love Me, I'll still love you anyway." Jesus even teaches, "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil" ([Luke 6:35](#)). We must be careful, however, not to misconstrue God's **love** for a lack of justice. Even though God loves us unconditionally, He hates sin and must punish those who refuse to repent and reject reconciliation through His Son.

How has God shown unconditional love to you?

Question  
# 2

In addition, God's **love** is not contingent upon circumstances which shift depending upon how one feels. As humans, we react to situations differently depending upon how we may feel that day, but God's **love** always remains constant and consistent. It never changes! He never loves any more or any less based upon what occurred at a specific point in history. External circumstances do not affect how God views or responds to the world in **love**.

Therefore, Paul can attest, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities

*I have been crucified with  
Christ,  
It is no longer I who live, but  
Christ who lives in me; and  
the life which I now live in the flesh  
I live by faith in the Son of God  
who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

*Galatians 2:20*

nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other

## Instruct

created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" ([Rom 8:38-39](#)).

How has God's love toward you been consistent?

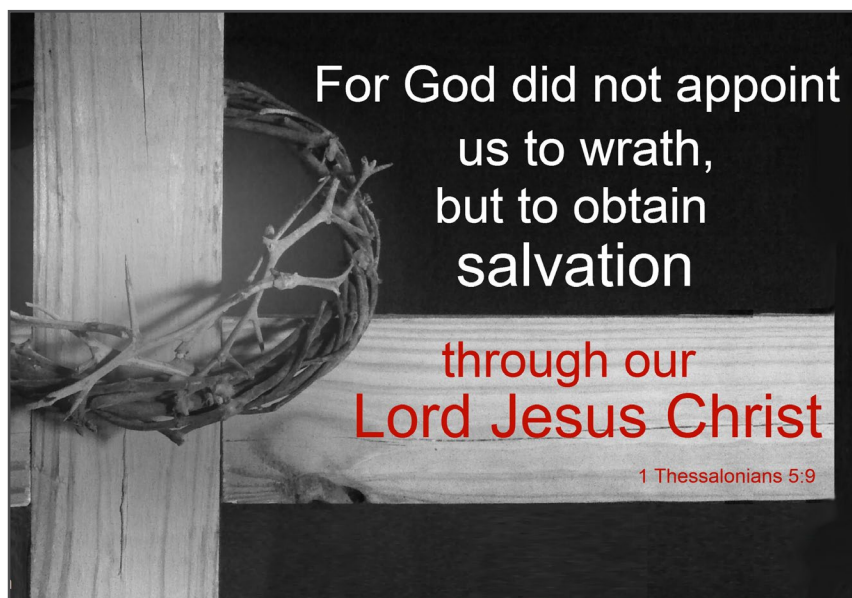
Question  
# 3

Second, John also points out the source of *confusion* about **love**: a worldly perspective. In verse 8, he argues that the one **who does not love does not know God**. The world often confuses **love** with lust in which they seek immediate gratification of their desires. This type of **love** is self-serving which seeks what others can do for us and how they can "fulfill" our needs; as a result, this type of **love** does not last because the world primarily bases it upon physical appearance and personal pleasure. It lacks commitment and loyalty. When people perceive they no longer find pleasure or satisfaction in a relationship, they search for placation somewhere else. Lust and infatuation, therefore, change constantly depending upon circumstances and how one feels at the time. For this reason, those with a worldly perspective constantly search for **love**, but they never truly find it apart from God.

### 1 John 4:9-10

#### THE CONFIRMATION OF GOD'S LOVE:

We see the evidence of God's love for us through the sacrificial death of **His only begotten Son** (v. 9). John neatly summarizes the whole purpose of Jesus being **sent into the world** by declaring that **we might live through Him**.



God didn't do this because **we loved Him first**, but because **He loved us**, so **He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins** (v. 10). We don't hear the word **propitiation** that frequently, so many of us may not know exactly what it means. It simply refers to the appeasement of God's wrath

against our sin by being reconciled and at peace with Him through **His Son** ([Rom 5:1-2](#)). Although God loves us unconditionally and never ceases to love us, He hates

unfaithfulness and sin which He must punish. When we choose to reject Christ and His gift of life, then we incur God's wrath upon our sin. His wrath isn't directed toward us as a person, but against our sins ([Rom 1:18](#)). God still loves us, but because we have chosen to remain in our sins, we have brought His wrath upon ourselves in the form of separation from Him and a second death. Yet, we don't have to incur His wrath because Christ paid the penalty for our sins and bore the wrath in our place ([1 Thess 5:9](#)). Through His excruciating death upon the cross, Jesus displayed a tremendous amount of **love** for His creation that sinned. Although He knew the cost, He still came to save us! In a recent song composed and performed by Cory Asbury called "Reckless Love," he describes the lengths to which God went to provide salvation for us. Nothing prevented or hindered Christ from coming to offer us reconciliation and salvation—not even death on the cross! Yet, the title of his hit song inaccurately describes God's **love** as "reckless." Traditionally defined, reckless means to act without thinking or caring about the consequences; one could even say it means to act foolishly; therefore, it carries with it a negative connotation. In coming to offer the gift of salvation, however, Christ did not act recklessly in **love** like some foolish teenager who throws caution to the wind, but He acted purposefully with direction through a plan He had developed before the foundation of the world!

What evidence can we cite from Scripture to show that God's love is purposeful and planned?

Question  
# 4

## 1 John 4:11

### **THE COMMAND TO LOVE LIKE GOD:**

In verse 11, John repeats the command with which he began this section in [verse 7](#): **beloved, we also ought to love one another**. This time he qualifies what kind of **love** by upholding God as the prime example. Since (literally **if**) **God so loved us**, then we should reflect His holy character by loving others. In Greek, the word translated **if** in this context doesn't express a possibility that God may or may not love us, but it expresses an assured reality best understood by the English word "since." Since **God loved us so** much to adopt us as His children when we accepted the gift of life through the sacrifice of Christ, we have an obligation **to love** others just as He **loved us**. To apply this command in our daily walk, we can identify four areas in which we can and should imitate God's **love** in our relationships with others: 1) spend quality time together, 2) show compassion, 3) serve, and 4) sacrifice.

## Instruct

First, and perhaps most difficult in our busy world, we ought to spend quality time together. God wants us to do that with Him through prayer, Bible study, and daily fellowship, so we should apply that same principle to our relationships. To spend quality time, we must communicate with each other, which includes learning to listen. Unless the typical family sets boundaries and is intentional about communication, family members and friends could all be in the same room, yet “virtually” miles apart. Likely, the television or other media will be playing while each person will probably be on his or her phone, tablet, or laptop. Usually, the messages they send on texts or other mediums have little value as they contain memes (pictures) and emoticons (symbols) rather than a thoughtful message. Sometimes people in the same room even text each other! Good communication requires that we pay attention to each other, share in life’s triumphs, and walk through life’s trials together.

How can we cultivate good communication in our relationships?

Question  
# 5

Besides good communication, spending time together means that we’re actively involved in the life of the person. We must be intentional about making time and doing things together because being too busy is only a convenient excuse. At the same time, however, we shouldn’t simply fill our schedules with “busy” activities and consider that quality time, but we must have meaningful interaction. Riding in the same car, attending the same event, or living in the same house can still lead to disconnectedness if we don’t pursue a connection with each other. Therefore, simply being “present” doesn’t constitute meaningful interaction; we must be engaged and involved! In the typical home, for example, we may all be present together, but we are isolated in our own areas and doing our own “thing.” Although we do need time alone, we can’t value that alone time so much that we become isolated.

In our busy and tech-oriented world, we need to think of creative ways to spend meaningful time together which cultivate relationships. When I go camping with others, fortunately most places in remote areas have little or no cell phone reception which forces us to put away our electronics, so we can spend time enjoying God’s creation, talking, and sharing life’s experiences together. In our daily lives, we can also be creative about finding ways to experience life together that instills values and teaches community. Instead of hurriedly eating out or having delivery, cook and eat

a meal together as a family when you can; do the chores together before you have “alone” time. Rather than merely attending or taking your children to extracurricular activities or hobbies find ways to encourage them and participate with them. Although you’re likely not a coach, instructor, or critic, try to practice with them at home for instance. When we do these things, we teach values, model integrity, and show **love** to others in a tangible way. Don’t be in a hurry to get from point A to point B in life, but make time to have meaningful relationships with others.



How else can we spend meaningful time together to grow in our relationships?

Question  
# 6

Second, we should exhibit **love** by showing compassion for others. When we think about compassion, we often equate it with pity or showing empathy for those in difficult situations. We should indeed walk through life together celebrating the good times and offering comfort in the bad times while interceding for one another through prayer ([2 Cor 1:3-11](#)). However, the concept of compassion entails so much more than just pity. We show compassion, therefore, by acting with integrity and keeping our word, so people can depend upon us and know what to expect ([Matt 5:37](#)). We also express compassion by forgiving others and seeking forgiveness when we err, so we can maintain healthy and functional relationships ([Matt 6:14-15; Eph 4:32](#)). Similarly, we should to extend grace and mercy to others—not to enable them to continue sinful, destructive, or unproductive behavior—but to point them to Christ and illustrate the better way He has called us to live ([Matt 5:7; 1 Peter 3:8-9](#)). In addition, we engage in compassion when we encourage and edify others ([1 Thess 5:11](#)). When encouraging others, we shouldn’t give a false sense of hope, present an inaccurate picture of reality, or create false self-esteem like the world does, but we must exhort with the truth and spur one another to live for Christ ([Heb 3:12-13](#)). Above all, the greatest way we can show compassion is by sharing the gospel with others; Jesus

## Instruct

didn't just have pity upon us and empathize with us, but He did something about it! We too have been called by Christ to do something about the hopelessness in the world in which we live by communicating the life-changing gospel of salvation in Jesus!

How have others shown you compassion? In what other ways can we show compassion to others?

Question  
# 7

Third, we should seek opportunities to serve one another in **love** which often requires sacrifice on our part. We live in a service-oriented culture which has trained us to evaluate others based on their performance in which we perceive how well they meet our needs. In many ways, we rarely look for opportunities to serve others, but look at how others can serve us—even in the church! However, Jesus has set the bar extremely high when He came to earth to serve rather than be served and to give His life freely as a ransom for our sins ([Mark 10:45](#)). Sometimes the most meaningful and impactful gestures are those in which we do the little things to meet the needs of others. We see a need and then meet it through the **love** of Christ. It can be as simple as holding the door for someone, picking up something a mother had dropped because her hands were full with her child, or giving someone a ride to the store or church ([Heb 10:24](#)). Service, at times, may mean that we must make sacrifices by putting our own needs aside to minister to others. Jesus did! We need not place ourselves in mortal danger or physical peril per se, but we need to serve others sacrificially with the **love** of Christ. For example, we may sacrifice our day off to help someone with home repairs or some other project even when we have our own pressing things which we must finish. It may mean using our vacation to participate on a mission trip or giving up one night a week to share the gospel locally here in our community. We must allow the Holy Spirit to guide us and consciously look for opportunities to serve in **love** rather than becoming stuck in the routine of this culture. Serve as Christ did and continues to do! In this way, we can fulfill the command to **love one another** by spending quality time, showing compassion, serving, and sacrificing. Let us, therefore, imitate the **love** our Lord and Savior has shown us!

How can we serve each other with a Christ-like love?

Question  
# 8



The culture has an incomplete and often misguided understanding of love because they do not know its source; they do not have a relationship with the One who is love! Only through Christ can we have a true picture of what love entails. All other ideas about love are merely a mirage as we learned in the introduction. Like those in the Sahara Desert searching for a life-saving oasis only to be deceived by their eyes, our world constantly searches for love, but never truly finds it apart from Christ! Like a mirage, they may think they have found love, but it always dissipates and the search stands endlessly before them. Truly, without Christ, the world is deceived by their hearts because they have no constant standard to which they can compare their love but only the fickle example of other human beings.

In Christ, however, we have an example of love that never fails, never fades, and never changes. He loves us unconditionally, unselfishly, and sacrificially so much that He offered us a way to escape the wrath that we brought upon ourselves through our sin! Through this greatest demonstration of love, we have a visible example to follow and apply in all our relationships. As we ponder what it means to love this week, let us compare our love to Christ's example rather than the cultural understanding around us. Prayerfully ask the Lord how you measure up to His standard and let us seek to imitate this high level of love in our own lives by reciprocating the love which God has shown us to those around us. Like Christ, may our character be defined by our love for Him and our love for others!

## ***Incorporate***

In what ways has the church today adopted the cultural understanding of love? Specifically, how does that hinder ministry and relationships within the church? What steps should we take to correct these errant views of love?

What is the danger of regarding love as an emotion? How does / should the love of God influence our character?

In what practical ways can we show love to one another?

MARCH 2020

WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED BY  
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