

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

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So That Your Joy May Be Complete – a study of First John

How to Know that You Know Him

1 John 2:3-11

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This morning, we are going to begin with an experiment. I have a lamp. And you probably don't know this but there is a power outlet right in front of the podium. The outlet is hidden in this little box that you can't see. So, here's the experiment. Even though you can't see the power outlet, I want to see if you can tell whether this lamp is plugged in or not.

When you think it's plugged in, I want you to say "in" (as in "it's plugged in"). When you think it's unplugged, I want you to say "not" (is in "it's not plugged in). That's all the instruction I'm going to give you. Let's give it a try. [Plug and unplug a few times.]

From where you're sitting, you can't see the actual connection of the plug with the outlet. So, how did you know? You saw unmistakable evidence when the light came on. You couldn't see the plug, but you could see evidence of power. The light comes on.

And that's a concept John is introducing in our next passage of study in 1 John. When you are living in connection with Jesus, it becomes evident in your life. Or, as John says it, you can know that you know Jesus. As a matter of fact, let me go ahead and give you our Big Idea.

Big Idea: We can know that we Know Jesus when His Spirit produces obedient love in us.

That's the primary thing John is saying in our text. Just like there is clear evidence that tells us when the lamp is plugged into the electrical supply, there is clear evidence that lets us know we are connected to the life of Jesus. And that evidence is that the Spirit of Jesus in us produces obedient love.

1 John 2:3–11

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

7 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. 8 At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. 9 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. 11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Like we do each week, let's work through the big idea a little bit at a time so I can show you where I'm seeing in it the text.

WE CAN KNOW JESUS

1 John 2:3

And by this we know that we have come to know him,

The idea of knowing Jesus goes all the way back to the opening lines of John's letter. John began by saying that Jesus is the Eternal God who came to this world in the person of Jesus. He's the Source of Life – eternal and abundant life. And John was an eyewitness to His ministry and message. He heard His voice and watched Him work. In other words, John knew Jesus. He had a personal relationship with Him.

And the message John is conveying to us in this letter is that we can have a personal relationship with Jesus, too.

1 John 1:3

that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

John is sharing the truth about Jesus with the recipients of this letter so that they would be able to enjoy fellowship with God the Father and God the Son. That word "fellowship" is a word that essentially means "to share in something; to partake." And what is it that we share in when we believe the truth about Jesus? We share in the life of God. Jesus shares His life with us as we trust in Him. That's what it means to have fellowship with God the Father and the Son.

One of the miraculous promises of the gospel is that when we place our faith and trust in Jesus, we are spiritually united to Jesus.

Let me give you just a couple of examples.

1 Corinthians 1:30

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

Galatians 2:20

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

As we trust in Jesus, we are spiritually united to the person and life of Jesus. So, when John says that we can know Jesus, he isn't just saying we can know facts about Him. He is saying we can have a personal relationship with Him. We can share in His life and resurrection power by the work of His Spirit in us. (that's fellowship – sharing, partaking in something)

And going back to our text, notice how John is making reference to that...

1 John 2:5

By this we may know that we are in him:

John uses similar wording here as he does in verse 3. But, instead of saying this is how we know that we know Jesus, he says this is how we know that we are in him. To know Jesus is to be in Him, to be united to Him.

1 John 3:24

Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

It's the Spirit of God that produces the life of Jesus in us. The Christian life isn't about works we do for Jesus, it's about works Jesus does for and through us by the power of His Spirit.

Think about my lamp. The reason I have to plug my lamp in is because it needs power it doesn't have on its own. Lamps don't make light by their own power. They have to have the power of electricity flowing through them. And for that to happen, they have to be connected. I didn't have to explain that to you earlier. It's so simple. You might not understand all the mysteries of electricity or the difference between alternating current or direct current, but you know enough to understand that a lamp that isn't plugged in won't produce light.

And that's a foundational principle to the gospel. We need power we don't have. We need to be connected to a source of life. And that Source is Jesus. He lives in us by the power of the Spirit as we trust in Him. And somehow, we forget that concept in our spiritual lives. It is astonishing to me how often I have tried to produce light without power – I've worked to stir up joy and peace and love in my heart only to be as powerless as an unplugged lamp.

That's why we need Jesus. But, John's point in our text isn't just that we can know Jesus.

WE CAN KNOW THAT WE KNOW JESUS

1 John 2:3

And by this we know that we have come to know him,

John doesn't want us to wonder if we are connected to the life of Jesus. He wants us to know that we know Jesus. That's one of the primary reasons he is writing this letter.

1 John 5:13

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

John wants us to have assurance of our salvation. He wants us to live with certainty that we are united to the life of Jesus and living in fellowship with Him. He wants us to be confident that our sins are forgiven and that we are destined for heaven. He wants us to know.

And in our text, he gives us two evidences that we know Jesus and are experiencing the power of His life in us.

John seems to be writing to two types of people. One type of person is naturally assured about everything. They never question themselves or their choices. These people are inclined to make rash statements without necessarily thinking them through. It seems John wants the people who are like this to stop and really examine their lives. Don't just make quick statements about your relationship with Jesus, take time to examine yourself to see if you are truly trusting in Jesus.

The other type of person is someone who naturally struggles to be sure about anything. I'm in this camp. (At least I'm pretty sure I am). I'm almost never 100% sure about anything. "Is your car black?" "Well, I'm not sure I would exactly call it black. It's more of a charcoal. But, then again, it's been faded in the Florida sun, so maybe I could say it used to be black. But I could be wrong." I stare at menus forever because I'm not sure what sounds good to me. And nowhere do people like us struggle with certainty more than in our relationship with Jesus. We can believe the gospel truths

about everyone but ourselves. And John wants to help us go beyond believing that we believe. He wants to help us know that we know.

And our text gives us two evidences that help us know that we are connected to Christ's power through a personal relationship with Him.

- EVIDENCE #1 – Obedience to Jesus

1 John 2:3-6

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

The first evidence that we know Jesus and are plugged in to the power of His life is that we desire to do what Jesus says we should do. Now, don't forget what we've seen the last two weeks. This isn't talking about sinless perfection. Verses 8 and 10 of chapter 1 say that we can't claim to never sin or we are liars. So, this isn't talking about sinless perfection. It's a statement of direction, not perfection. What I mean is that when we place our faith and trust in Jesus, the direction of our life changes. We no longer want to live in the direction of sin. We want to live in the direction of obedience to Jesus. That's why it's call "following Jesus."

Faith in Jesus expresses itself through obedience to Jesus. And it only makes sense. How are we united to the life of Jesus? Through faith. Faith is believing the truth about Jesus in a way that places your trust in Him.

You believe He is good and loves you. You believe He is the Lord, meaning He is the One in authority over your life. You believe He is God and knows exactly what is best for you. And when you truly believe those things about Jesus, you want to do what He says to do. In a way, this is true about all of our relationships.

Imagine you are in a conversation with your spouse. You ask them if they love you and trust you and they say they do. Then you ask them if they will give you their wallet and they refuse. If they love and trust you, why would they refuse to give you their wallet? Something would be off there.

Or you are talking with one of your kids about a decision they should make. And they say they believe you are wise and that you care about them and they completely trust you. So, you tell them what you think they should do and they completely blow you off. Why would they do that if they really believe you and trust you? That wouldn't make sense unless they are teenagers...just kidding.

It's a contradiction of terms to say we believe the truth about the goodness and authority and love of Jesus but refuse to do what He says.

In Luke 6:46, Jesus says, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

That's essentially what John is saying in our text. He says whoever says they really know Jesus but does not keep His commands is a liar. That's strong language but it's just the truth.

John is calling us to take an honest look at our lives and ask a simple question of ourselves, "Do I endeavor to do what Jesus says I should do?"

- Do I seek to teach my children about the Lord? (Ephesians 6)
- Do I honor the word of God above the philosophies of man or my own natural way of thinking? (2 Timothy 3)
- Do I live with sexual purity? (Matthew 5)
- Do I fight anxiety by seeking to believe His promise to provide for all my needs? (Matthew 6)
- Do I give Jesus a portion of the money He has given to me so that I can be part of advancing His kingdom? (2 Corinthians 9)

Again, this isn't the claim of sinless perfection it's the evidence of our general direction. When we trust Jesus, we do what He says.

Even more, it's a by-product of the Holy Spirit living in us. Knowing Jesus personally means we have His Spirit living in us forming the life of Christ in us. And when Jesus lives in us He lives like Jesus in us. That's why verse 6 of our text says we should walk the same way Jesus walked in this world. Jesus lives like Jesus. So, when Jesus lives in us, we begin to live more like Jesus.

Assurance of our salvation grows through obedience to our Savior. When your life is plugged in to the life of Jesus, the light of His life will shine more and more brightly through you.

That's the first evidence – obedience to Jesus.

- EVIDENCE #2 – Love for Others

1 John 2:7-11

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

John narrows in on one, specific command. He says it's an old commandment. What does he mean by that?

2 John 5

And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another.

The old commandment is that we love one another. That commandment comes from Leviticus 19:18 where God tells us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. That's an old commandment. But then John seems to contradict himself in verse 8 by saying that it is a new commandment. How is it a new commandment if it's an old commandment?

Well, Jesus made it a new commandment because He expanded our understanding of it. That's why verse 8 says it's true in Him. He is the perfect display of what it truly means to fulfill the command to love others.

He showed us new ways to love people. In Matthew 5 and in Luke 10, He said that it includes our enemies. He showed us that we should love people who don't love us in return. We should pray for people who oppose us. We should forgive people who have wronged us. Jesus is the only person to every perfectly love others. In that way, He showed us new and powerful dynamics about the command to love other. And when Jesus loves others through us, He loves them like Jesus. In other

words, we can know that we are united to the life of Jesus when we begin to love people like Jesus loves people.

That's what I believe John is pointing to in verse 8 when He says the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. The darkness that is passing away is a reference to this world and it's fallen, sinful dynamics.

1 John 2:17

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

When we are united to Jesus through faith, we become part of His new Kingdom, a Kingdom that is filled with the light of His love. We stop living like the rest of this world. We stop loving the things of this world and start loving what Jesus loves. And Jesus loves people.

So, one of the ways we can know that Christ is living in us is that Jesus transforms our hearts and we begin to love the people Jesus loves the way Jesus loves them. And do you know who Jesus loves? He loves everyone you know. He loves everyone you see. He loves everyone. Do you?

- Do you love your wife like Jesus selflessly and sacrificially loves the church?
- Do you love your husband in a way that honors his role as the head of your home?
- Do you love your children in a way that seeks to teach them about Jesus?
- Do you love your neighbors in a way that desires to show them the gospel of Jesus?
- Do you love your enemies in a way that wants them to know the truth about Jesus and be saved?
- Do you love your political opponents?

John has a lot more to say about loving people, so we won't go too far down this road but just let this truth sink into your hearts this morning.

- Love doesn't gossip about or slander people you love.
- Love doesn't withhold forgiveness from people you love.
- Love doesn't withhold truth from people you love.
- Love doesn't tear down or harm people you love.

So, is the love of Jesus growing in your heart? If not, then something isn't right. And the answer isn't to try and produce love by your own power. That isn't John's point. You need something far stronger than your own power. You need Jesus. And we don't just need Him, we have Him. For God so loved this world that He gave us Jesus. Jesus came to give His life for us so that He could live His life through us.

So, turn to Jesus today. Yield your life to Him. Believe and trust in Him. By faith, step into obedient love in the power of God's Spirit. And may His light shine brightly in you today.