

1 John, Part 4 – Know God – Love One Another

The second test to show that we know God is, “We love one another.” John is continuing a seven-fold test to certify that we really know God. He began this epistle by reminding us that God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. The first sign that we know God was, “We keep His commandments.” Those who say they abide in Him should walk and conduct themselves in the same manner in which He did. This means all who fellowship God should walk in the light just as He is in the light. Our fellowship with God and one another is associated with walking in the light. We cannot walk in the light without walking in obedience to the Word of God or His commandments.

When John and Paul wrote their epistles, the foundations of the Christian faith were being challenged by Gnosticism. Gnosticism was a heresy that was developed in the late first and early second century. Early Christians and Gnostics shared some terminology and were difficult to distinguish. The word Gnostic was not coined until the 17th century. Early Gnostics were a heresy of Christianity. The terminology of early Christians and the Gnostics was similar. Spiritual elites and not the masses have light or had special revelations and truth. Their “light” was brought about by a series or progression of enlightenments or spiritual knowledge. According to them, truth could only be validated by personal experience or perception. Early Gnostics believed Christ came to bring this light or enlightenment. The light they spoke of was not the “Light or Truth” of God. In many ways, Gnostics’ beliefs were similar to Buddhism and Hinduism. In each of these, spiritual insight and attainments supersede and disregard rules and the way things are usually done.

1 John 2:9-11 NKJV He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

John is showing how walking in God’s light impacts our relationship and love for one another.

Remember the atmosphere in the early church was being challenged by heresies. The influence of gnosticism was impacting the harmony and fellowship of early believers. Some felt they were greater than other believers for various reasons.

1 Corinthians 1:11-13 NIV84 My brothers, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?

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The division that had arisen in the early church was causing some to stumble or be offended. John was saying, “If you really know God you will love one another and not be a stumbling block to one another.” Their claim of knowing God was invalidated by their actions. We do not know God if we do not love our neighbors. John said this is not a NEW but a very OLD commandment. The Gnostics were constantly telling everyone they had a “new revelation” or “new enlightenment.” Jesus taught this commandment of love from the beginning. God gave the commandments to Moses and Israel. John is re-establishing the fact that this commandment was not his idea but God’s.

Then John said this is a NEW COMMANDMENT. What makes this commandment about love new? Jesus Christ gave new meaning to love. He defined love by actually living love. It was more than a concept of love or an emotion.

Jesus Christ loved in word and action.

- He loved friends and enemies.
- He loved good people and bad people.
- He loved the righteous and the sinner.
- He loved the acceptable and the rejected.
- He loved the wise and the unwise.
- He loved the clean and the dirty.

Matthew 5:43–46 NKJV “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?”

This is a new concept of love. This kind of love is more than loving those who love you.

In the world, everyone was free to mistreat those who mistreated them.

People in the world feel free to hate, strike back, and hurt. They ignore, neglect, and criticize others that are different. They are unkind, retaliate, and say evil things. Get even first. Jesus said we are not to mistreat others regardless of what they have done or who they are. We are to love everyone.

Look at verse 45, “That you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” The only way to be children of God is to love as God loves. If we do not love, we do not know God.

John 13:34–35 NKJV Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Love is a distinguishing factor in the Lord’s disciples. We are commanded to love one another. Our relationship with and knowledge of God is equated by our love for others. The person who truly follows God has the love of God in them.

God’s love does not JUST dwell in God. The love of God dwells in and becomes the overwhelming nature of the believer. Anyone who says they abide in Christ should walk as He walked.

1 John 2:7 NLT Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather it is an old one you have had from the very beginning. This old commandment—to love one another—is the same message you heard before.

There is always a danger of drifting away from the beginning. The commandment of the Gospel of Christ has not changed. This message brings a new life of love, joy and peace.

1 John 2:8-9 NLT Yet it is also new. Jesus lived the truth of this commandment, and you also are living it. For the darkness is disappearing, and the true light is already shining. If anyone claims, “I am living in the light,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness.

John’s epistle was written to believers.

The “darkness” refers to their old way of living and ideas about love. The old concept of love was to love those who love you. Many of these new believers had lived in hatred and

passions. They reacted and retaliated against anyone who mistreated them. If anyone hurts you, you have the right to hurt them. If anyone kills your animal, you can kill theirs. It was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Keep records of how you have been treated or mistreated. It was unnecessary to do good to those who were not worthy.

When John wrote about darkness, He was referring to the way people lived. They were formerly in darkness and lived with hatred and evil passion. When John said, "the darkness is passing away," he is referring to the light of the Gospel of Christ. Some of them were in darkness until now (or still) and hated their Christian brother. Although they were with the household of believers, they still lived like they always had.

John 8:12 NKJV Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

The person who professes to know God but hates other believers has a false profession of faith.

It is not enough to believe in Christ, be baptized in water, attend church, take communion, read the Bible and pray. If anyone claims, "I am living in the light," but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness.

Jesus disclosed the light and love to us by His actions and words.

Matthew 6:23 NLT But an evil eye shuts out the light and plunges you into darkness. If the light you think you have is really darkness, how deep that darkness will be!

What is Jesus saying? There is a difference in an evil and a good eye. Some people think they have light, but they are really walking in darkness.

John 3:19 gives some more insight into this.

John 3:19 NKJV And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

If you are you are living as most people live, you are living in the darkness of this world and do not know God.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NKJV Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

When our life is controlled by love, there is no room for stumbling or offense.

There is nothing that causes hurt or destruction in love. Love removes the offense. Love is the great binding force for believers.

Romans 8:35-39 AMP Who shall ever separate us from Christ's love? Shall suffering and affliction and tribulation? Or calamity and distress? Or persecution or hunger or destitution or peril or sword? ³⁶Even as it is written, For Thy sake we are put to death all the day long; we are regarded and counted ³⁷as sheep for the slaughter. ³⁷Yet amid all these things we are more than conquerors and gain a surpassing victory through Him Who loved us. ³⁸For I am persuaded beyond doubt (am sure) that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things impending and threatening nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹Nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The closer we get to God, the more we will love. There is security in knowing that God

loves us. When we walk in His love, we are under His protection, provision, and power.

Everyone needs love. We need more than sentimental feeling and passions. The Gnostics relied on feeling, passion, and enlightenment. We need to be loved with the love of God. This love lets us know that God cares for us. His love delivers us when we are bound or sick. His love strengthens us when we are weak. His love pulls us together when we are apart.

1 John 2:11 AMP But he who hates (detests, despises) his brother in Christ] is in darkness and walking (living) in the dark; he is straying and does not perceive or know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Do you really know God?

Whoever walks in darkness does not know the light of Christ and does not know God. The darkness has consumed them and blinded their eyes. They cannot even perceive the light. Everything is darkness to them and they have no direction. They are blind. Their focus in life revolves around self-interests and influence. Anyone who enters into the darkness of hate or bitterness becomes increasingly blinded. Their life becomes consumed with the darkness.

Ephesians 5:1-2 NKJV Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ²And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

This gets back to this old commandment that is made new. As God's dear children we should walk in love.