

How To Know that You are a Christian

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[0:00] 1 John chapter 1 and we're going to read verses 5 through chapter 2 and verse 11.

! This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you. God is light. In him there is no darkness at all.

If we claim to have fellowship with him, yet walk in the darkness, we lie. And do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

And the blood of Jesus, his son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves. And the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins. And purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar.

[1:08] And his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense.

Jesus Christ, the righteous one. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world.

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, I know him, but does not do what he commands is a liar.

And the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him.

Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command, but an old one, which you have had since the beginning.

[2:17] This old command is the message you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command. It's truth is seen in him and you because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.

But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. He does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded him.

Tonight we begin a new series entitled How To. How To.

All these things have one thing in common and it's going to presume, as I speak to you, that you are a Christian. And that's the topic I actually want to talk to you about tonight. There doesn't seem to be any better starting place than to begin with this.

[3:53] How to know if you are a Christian or not. Well, let me explain why it's so important and I'll explain it like this. During college, for one year I went to Purdue University and I would take the bus from the campus to my off-campus apartment.

And I grew up in a cornfield and the Transpo bus map was very confusing. Maybe not for you people, but for me it was.

And so one time I got on a bus and I sat down and we're riding, driving along, and we're making this stop and that stop. And then I realized the bus I was on wasn't going the right way at all.

I was on the wrong bus. Well, and eventually I made it home. But not until after I made a huge detour of the entire greater West Lafayette that you were intending to be.

You made the last stop in the line and you're not anywhere near where you thought you were going. And maybe you, spiritually speaking, you're on the wrong bus, but you think you are on the right bus.

[5:14] And you think you're on the bus to heaven. You're riding along, happy as can be, but you have no right to be happy. And so today I want to wake you up and I want to show you, if you're on the wrong bus, I want to show you that you are on the wrong bus, that you're going the wrong way.

And I want to show you how to get on the right bus, going the right direction. But there are others here, maybe, that you're on the right bus.

You're going the right way. You're on your way to heaven, but you're not so sure. You're not so sure. You don't have any assurance about this.

You are a Christian, but you're wondering, really, has something happened? Has something gone on in my heart? I'm not sure. Am I a Christian really after all?

Well, how do you tell if you're a Christian or not? Well, there's something that you can do to find out.

And we're not going to turn there, but it's found in 2 Corinthians 13, 5.

[6 : 19] And Paul says to the Corinthians there, Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Examine yourselves. Test yourselves.

Try yourself. Do an experiment. And that's how you know if you're a Christian or not. You test yourself to see whether you're in the faith. And so tonight is all about self-examination.

Self-examination. So I want you to, for the time being here, forget that you are in a crowd.

Forget that there's other people here. And look at yourself and talk to God. Think about yourself.

Forget about what others are hearing this word.

Don't be thinking, oh yeah, that person really needs to hear that. It's a time for you to examine yourself. Well, how do you examine yourself?

[7 : 20] Well, it's fairly clear to understand. This morning I got up and I examined myself. How did I do that? I looked in the mirror and I made sure I was decent enough to be in front of a bunch of people.

And you should do that tonight. You need to look at yourself in the mirror. And you need to look at yourself from the word of God. And compare yourself to what the Christian and his picture is like from there.

And so your job is to ask yourself, do I look like that? I'm going to paint you a picture of what a Christian looks like. And your job is to say, well, is that me or not?

Don't presume that you are. Don't presume that you are. One time I presumed that my suit pants and my suit jacket matched.

And guess what? They didn't. I came up here and no one told me any different. And I had black pants on and a blue suit coat on.

[8 : 22] And we can't presume. So examine yourself. So what does a Christian look like? Well, God doesn't leave us to guess what he, that Christian, looks like.

He has given us a whole book. And it's 1 John that tells us this is what a Christian looks like. And so hopefully you have it opened. And we looked at, we, Pastor John mentioned verse 9 this morning.

We're going to look at verse 8 here really quick. And here in verse 8 of chapter 1, we see the first test, the first experiment to find out if who's a Christian and who's not.

How do you know that? Ask yourself. Verse 8. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

John is full of these if-then statements.

[9 : 18] If statements. And they're all tests to find out if you're a Christian or not. So if you claim to have not sinned, then you're deceived and the truth isn't in you.

Well, what does that exactly mean? What does it mean to claim that you're not, that you're without sin? I don't think exactly, John's not exactly saying that this is the person who claims to be sinless. That he's claiming to be perfect. I don't think John is talking to that, you know, half a percent of people in the whole wide world that actually think that they never do anything wrong. Who actually think they're perfect.

The question is, how do you see your sin? What do you think about sin? To claim to be without sin is not to say, oh, I never make a mistake or I never mess up.

It's to say, yeah, I do bad things. They're really not that bad. It's to measure your sinful actions by your own sinful attitudes and your own your own heart's estimation of what sin is.

[10 : 28] It's not to measure sin by God's holiness. It's to measure it by your unholiness. So you go to the Bremen Fireman's Festival or the Blueberry Festival and you buy a ticket and you go into the House of Mirrors.

And maybe you've been there, maybe you haven't, but you know what it's like. In that House of Mirrors, reality is distorted. Tall people go in there and they look short. And short people go in there and they look really tall.

And skinny people go in there and they look really wide. And that's what's going on in the minds of sinful men all the time. They're looking at themselves with a distorted view and they're saying a tall person is saying, I am a short person.

And they're believing what they're seeing and what they're saying about themselves. They're saying, I'm really not that bad. Yes, I mess up, but my sin isn't that bad.

And then they believe it. That's why John in verse six says they're walking around in darkness. These people, they're blind to God.

[11 : 40] They don't see God's holiness. They don't see sin as a terrible attack on the beauty of God. Sin isn't horrible.

They claim to be a Christian. But their thoughts betray them. Their actions betray them. And John says, that's not so. If we claim to be without sin.

If we if we don't own our sinfulness, then we're still walking around in the dark. We're still in the house of mirrors and pretending like what we see is real.

So here's what a Christian looks like. Let me throw back the curtain on what a Christian is like. He sees sin as sin.

He sees the sinfulness of sin. And more important than any of that, he sees himself as a sinner. And whatever else he is, he's a sinner.

[12 : 38] And so he sees sin not as a little thing. It's not a little thing that you could just push off or push down.

If you're a Christian here, you know what I'm saying. When there are times when you wish you could die rather than keep that sinful heart in your chest. And he goes.

That sin goes with him wherever he goes. He's never without it. And that's what a Christian looks like. A Christian sees sin.

He hates sin. And he knows that he is a sinner. So that's what a Christian looks like. Do you look like that?

Is that what goes on in your life and your thoughts and your feelings? Examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith. John moves on.

[13 : 37] And we go down a few verses to chapter 2, verse 3. And he gives us the second test. We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.

Well, how do you know if you know God, if you love God, if you're a Christian? Examine yourself. Do you obey his commands? John says all true Christians are obedient.

Day in and day out. Lifelong, consistent obedience. They obey his commands. Not perfectly, but the tenor of their life.

The fabric of their life is such that they are living lives of obedience. And why do they do that? It's because they know him. If you know him, then you obey him.

And so what's the connection there? What's the connection between knowing God and obeying God? Well, here's the connection. To know God is to know that he's the creator and I'm the creature.

[14 : 41] And to know that he is the king. He is the lawgiver. And I am under that law. And it's to know that he's the savior. And so there's this unbreakable, unstoppable, undefeatable argument going on in every single Christian's heart.

And it's put there by the Holy Spirit. And it says, God is the creator. He's the lawgiver. He's the Lord. And so I will obey him. And so every Christian has this reasoning going on in his own heart.

He reasons from who God is to who I am. Now, and the conclusion is, therefore, I will give him lifelong, glad-hearted, day in and day out obedience to his commands.

But we want to make this a little more specific and understand this a little better. And we want to say, wait a second. Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

What about Satan? What about the devils? They know God. They probably know more about God than all of us know about God. But their knowledge doesn't lead them to obedience.

[15 : 59] I mean, they know he's creator. And they know he's the lawgiver. And they know he's the savior. So how, why is John so certain that if you know God, then you're going to obey God?

It's because of the type of knowing that John is talking about. He's not just talking about intellectual knowledge that all the devils have. He's talking about this coming to know him.

And it's not this merely intellectual knowledge. This whole passage exudes with the idea of fellowship, of walking with God. And so that's what the Christian, this is the kind of knowing that

we're talking about.

It's this intimate fellowship, husband, wife, intimate relationship. And so that whole passage, John is talking and saying that the Christians share life with God.

They know God. And according to John, the way that we come to know God like that is through the supernatural rebirth, the birth of the Holy Spirit.

[17:01] So to come to know God is to be born again. Amen. So when God raises us from the dead spiritually, and when we're born again by the power of the Spirit, he opens up our eyes and he changes our heart.

And he puts new desires in us. And we love him with new emotions. We see things that were beautiful before and we didn't see any beauty in them before, but now they're beautiful.

And we desire him with new desires. And part of that desire, that love is directed to his law. And we worshiped around this idea this morning.

And the psalmist said, oh, how love I thy law. And so the first question, the first test is about what do you think about sin? And this one is related to it.

What do you think about God's law? Is it beautiful? Are his laws good? Right? They're worthy to be obeyed. Do you obey God's commands? And if you do, if you say, yes, I love them.

[18:12] I love his laws. Then you can know that you've come to know him. You've passed from death to life. Now, is obeying God always easy, even for a Christian?

The answer is no. No. But inside of every Christian, inside the during those difficult times, he obeys nevertheless. Or when he falls, he's quick to confess because his attitude towards God's commands remain the same.

They're worthy to be obeyed. Even when I disobey, I'm quickly coming back to him and saying, God, I'm sorry. I should have obeyed. But on the other hand, we would be grossly mistaken to always say that it's hard for a Christian to obey God's commands.

After all, he's put a new heart in us. He's written his laws in our heart. And so what does a Christian look like at the very bottom?

He has this heart that beats with I want to obey. I want to obey his commands. So. What's your attitude towards God's commands?

[19:22] That's what a Christian looks like. Do you look like that? Examine yourself. Well, we don't have to go far for John's third test. Go down to verse nine.

Anyone who claims to be in the light. But hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light and there's nothing in him to make him stumble.

So are you on the right bus? Are you going the right way? Is your bus on its way to heaven? The question you need to ask here is, do you love God's people? What's your attitude towards God's people?

John says, if you don't love the brothers, then you can't love God. You don't love God. You're a liar. You're still in the darkness. And so let me ask you, is God's people, are God's people your people? They're your people. Is this where you belong? Is this where you're home? If you look around and you say, you know what?

[20:27] I don't want to be anywhere else. These are my people. I mean, Christmas would be so much better. These were just the people that I was with. Life would be so much better if all the people that were here were these kinds of people.

I love them. I love them. They're with me. They're my brothers. They're my sisters. If that's you, then you're walking in the light.

You're a Christian. But with you, if it's the other way, if you're saying, well, I love God, but the people of God, it's a take it or leave it matter.

Well, then John says, you're a liar. You don't love God. You're deceived. John says in chapter four, if anyone says, I love God, yet hates his brother, he is a liar.

So no one can come or no one can at the same time love God and hate God's people. Can't do it. You see, it's a matter of taste.

[21:34] When you're born again, you receive new taste buds, new spiritual taste buds. And God has a certain holy taste. And that same taste is found in his people.

And the reason is, is because he's in them. And so no one can say, I love God, but I don't really love God's people. I don't love these holy rollers. And John would say, you're a liar.

God is holy. And if you love holiness, you'll love holiness wherever it's found. You might love the God of your imagination. You might love the God that you've fooled yourself into thinking is real, but you don't love the God that actually indwells God's people.

Now, I don't like onions. I, I really don't. If I go to your house and you serve me and cook something with chunks of onions, I'm sorry.

I'm not going to eat it. Just. To make you aware of that. I'm going to save myself years of grief if you get that. It's partially the flavor and it's mostly the texture.

[22:45] It just sets me on edge. I don't like it. And I don't like onions and I don't like onions in my food. Now, if you say you love God, but you don't love.

God's people, you don't love where God is found. Well, that doesn't make any sense. That's like me saying, oh, I love onions. But you know what? I hate every single place where I find onions.

I hate onions and lasagna and I hate onions and pizza and salad. I hate onions and all those places. But I love onions. It doesn't make sense. And it's the same way with this.

You can't love God if you don't love God's people because God is in them. And he's indwelling them and he's remaking them into his likeness. So if you love God's people, then you can know that you love God.

If you love what they talk about and you love that they talk about Jesus and you love the worship and you love their gladness and their joy and the things that you see of Christ in them, then you can know that you love them.

[23:51] If you love onions wherever they're found and pizza and lasagna and salad, then you can know that you love onions. And if you love God where he is found, then you love God.

So young people, older people, let me ask you, who are your closest friends? Who are your closest friends?

I'm not asking you, who do you spend the most time with? Because that doesn't necessarily get to the point. Who are you closest to? Who do you have the best time with?

Where are you home at? Are they God's people? And so the question that really I'm asking you and that question asks you, what direction is the compass of your heart pointed?

Is it pointed north to God's people? Or is it pointed somewhere else to the world or to other people? Is that the direction that you want to go?

[24:53] I remember when I was a teenager, most of my friends were unsaved people and I was a Christian and they were my friends and I hung out with them and I did things with them.

But you know what? But my heart wasn't pointed in that direction. My heart was leaving them behind. My life hadn't worked it out.

Maybe you guys know what I'm talking about. Sometimes it takes a while to iron these things out and my life hadn't worked it out yet. But my heart had already made up its mind that these people weren't my people really.

My friends weren't so cool anymore. And as a matter of fact, I looked at them and I thought, these people are really shallow. They're missing the big things in life. And they're enthralled with just really dumb things.

And I just wasn't with them anymore. My heart was pointed north to God's people. And so I'm asking, is that going on in your own heart?

[25:55] Maybe you haven't had this massive change of friends yet. But you're feeling this magnetic pull away from them and towards God's people.

And now all of a sudden you're looking around at these people that you see at church and you're thinking, you know, yeah, they're pretty weird, but I'm getting to be pretty weird myself.

And I think that's where I belong. That's how you can know if you've passed from darkness to light, from death to life.

Do you love God's people? That's what a Christian looks like. Do you look like that? Examine yourself to see if you're in the faith.

John gives a fourth test in verse 15. Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

[27:04] For everything in the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does, comes not from the Father, but from the world. So how do you know if you're a Christian or not?

Fourth test. Fourth test. Is your heart at one with the world? Do you love this world? So I've been showing you this picture of a Christian.

Let me show you another picture of the world. And John fills this out. What does it look like? What do you see? Well, you see men doing culture. You see men getting together and doing things. Of making governments. And playing politics. And making money. And planning entertainment. And spending money. But the way these men are doing it is directly opposed to what God says. And God's priorities. God says, do these things this way. And man says, no, I am doing it my own way. That's what the world is.

[28:06] And so what are the principles that drive this world? What's the skeleton that holds this world together? Well, John gives it to us. The cravings of sinful man. It's the first steel beam that holds the house of the world together.

Sinful man's cravings. And I don't know exactly what John had in mind. But we're talking about the cravings for power.

For control. For independence. The cravings. The desires that every man wants. It's in the sinful heart. That's what the world is about.

Well, then you have a second beam that's holding up this house. And it's the lust of the eyes. And you can see how these are related. The desire for things that are seen. For the things that are touched.

For this visible world. I want a kingdom here. I'm not looking for a better country. This is my country. And so the things that are seen.

[29:07] Stuff. What my house looks like. What I have in my house. Cars. Clothes. Sexual pleasures. Food.

Food. It's the lust of men's eyes. The things that they want. It's the first thing. It's the most important thing in their life. And below it all is this foundation.

What does the structure of the world rest on? It's this foundation of man's pride. Look what I have. Look what I've done. And that's the world.

Now what do you think about it? Do you love it? Do you want it? Are its priorities your priorities? Do you live to keep in step with the latest technological trends?

To have the nicest house on the block? Do you measure happiness the way the world does? Do you measure success the way the world does?

[30:08] Do you measure failure the way the world does? Do you do it the world's way or God's way? Whose priorities? Do you love the people that are doing life without God?

Like those are my people. That's the way I do life. That makes sense to me. Is that you? Well if you love the world. You can't love God.

Can't love God. But if you hate that kind of living. And if you're seeing more and more. That world. It's upside down. It's completely wrong headed.

It is going the wrong way. It's confused. It's. It's sinful. It's wicked. It's rebellious. And I hate that kind of living. And I hate that kind of thinking. And I hate that kind of feeling.

Then take heart. Then take heart. That kind of fruit. Doesn't grow. On a natural tree. That kind of fruit doesn't grow.

[31:09] In a natural man. That fruit doesn't come from you. You must be alive. The spirit must be in you. You must have passed from death to life. And you must know God. You must have been born again. You must be a Christian. And so.

You're taking. You're on the right bus. You're going the right way. So take heart. You aren't what you used to be. You're not what you want to be.

But you're not what you used to be. So praise God. Now. We've looked at four. Questions. Four tests.

To ask yourself. Do you see sin as sin? Do you obey God's commands? Do you love God's people? Do you love this world? Or do you hate it? Now.

If you've looked at the Christian's picture. And you've looked in the mirror. And said. Hey. That's me. That's what I look like. Not perfectly.

[32:05] I'm still growing. But you know what? Things are different now. I think that's what I look like. Then take heart. Your hope isn't in vain. You're not on the wrong bus. You're on the right bus. But now.

If you're saying. I'm looking at that picture. And that's not me. Really. That's. That's not me. There's going to be.

A strong. Temptation. To do. Exactly. The wrong. Thing. And the temptation. Is going to be this. Well.

You know what? I need to do. I need to start doing those things. I. I need to start. Loving. God's people. I. I need to start hating sin more.

I. I need to start. Obeying. I need to start hating this world. And. I need to start doing these things. Well. Let me tell you right now. That is not the way.

[33:01] That you get off the bus. And start going the right way. You have to realize. You have to realize.

That you have to see yourself. Right from the beginning. You have to see that you. Can't do anything. To get off the wrong bus. And get on the right bus.

You can't do anything. To save yourself. You're dead. You're dead. You're in the hearse. But you're not driving.

The hearse. You get it. You're. You're on the way. And you have. No way. To stop. What's happening. You can't do anything. To change that heart of yours.

You can't. Make yourself. Love. God's people. You can't. Make yourself. Hate sin. And love the world. Can a leopard.

[33:57] Change its spots. No. No amount of wishing. No amount of trying. No amount of doing. Will change a heart.

A dirty heart. Can't make something clean. And so the best. That you could do. Is to force yourself. To obey. And the best. That you could do.

Is to pretend. That you hate this world. Than love God's people. And you have to see. That you. It's a hopeless situation. If you're looking at yourself.

It's absolutely hopeless. You can't. You can't believe. You can't do the first thing. Jesus. Must. Save.

You. Jesus. Must save you. From first to last. He must. Save you. And. It's not. Until you. See that.

[34:52] How desperate. You are. That you will ever. Do. What needs to be done. And that is to. Believe on the Lord Jesus. To turn to him.

To see that Jesus. Is your only hope. And that's the. It's only when you get to that point. When you look inside of yourself. And you say. I can't do the first thing.

To become a Christian. That you actually are in the position. To do the first thing. And that's by God's grace. And that's when you repent. And believe. And it's by repenting.

And believing. That you get off the wrong bus. And you get on the right bus. And start heading the right direction. That's when you turn around. You repent. And you believe. And that.

That is what all Christians do. Repent. It means to renounce. Sin. To say I hate it.

[35:48] It's not just confession. To say oh I've messed up. Lots of people confess that. And it's not just remorse. To be sad about that. Lots of people. Are sad about their sin.

They're sad that they've got caught. They're sad that the damage. That it's doing. Lots of people feel bad. For what they've done. But they never repent. Repentance. Is turning away.

From that sin. Changing your mind. About that sin. And leaving it. Forever behind. Of saying. I am not. Going. That direction.

It's forsaking it. But when you turn away. From sin. You have to turn. To something. And that's faith. When you turn away. From sin.

The only place to turn. Is to the Lord Jesus. Jesus. And that's faith. And repentance. Repentance. And faith. Looking away. From your own sin.

[36:41] Your own goodness. The things that you can do. And looking to Jesus. And say. He has to do it all. From first to last. He has to do it. It has to be his life. His death. Because I can't do it.

I am. I have no options. Except for that option. So repentance. And faith. They are like Siamese twins. Conjoined twins.

They have two names. But they share a life. Wherever. They go. When one is there. The other one is there.

And when one is absent. The other one is absent. They always. Are together. And so it's faith. And repentance. This turning away from sin.

This turning to Jesus Christ. In. In desperation. That marks every true believer. The Christian life begins there. And the Christian life.

[37:37] Stays there. We saw it this morning. That the Christian life. Is a gospel saturated life. And if your life is gospel saturated. You're going to be doing these things.

All the time. Repenting. Believing. Repenting. Believing. Confessing. Trusting. It isn't a one time thing. It is a constant reality.

In every single Christian's life. And so the final question. The final test. To see whether you are a Christian or not. Are you repenting? Are you believing?

Those are present tense. Continuous verbs. Are you doing it now? Not in the past. Are you doing it now? Don't say. Well I did that ten years ago. I gave my life to Jesus ten years ago.

I repented and was baptized twenty years ago. That doesn't matter. The question is. Are you repenting and believing today? So are you walking away from sin?

[38:37] And are you turning to Jesus? For help. For cleansing. With every fall. You're turning. And looking to Christ. For that freedom. For the cleansing power of his blood.

That's how you begin. And that's how you stay on. So we thought this morning. The Christian life is a gospel saturated life.

It's a life that was. And is. And will be. All about the gospel. All about Jesus. And the way we repent. Or the way we relate to the gospel.

Is by repenting and believing. And so is that you? Is that you? That's what a Christian looks like. Do you look like that?

And if it's not. There's only one thing to do. You have to beg. With all your heart. For God to have mercy on you.

[39:34] And the good news is. He says that if you will seek me. With all of your heart. You will find me. You'll find me. And so.

If you're not a Christian. Go to Christ. And be saved. Go with all of your heart. And be saved. Let's pray. Our heavenly father.

I pray that you would. Speak into our own hearts. As we. Go on our way. Holy spirit. Come and. Drive the truth home.

And. To. To many people's hearts. People here. Save them. And Lord. If there are any who are confused. And who.

Who. Have an assurance. But they shouldn't have an assurance. I pray that you would wake them up. And save them. And if there are any here that.

[40:38] They don't have assurance. And yet they should. I pray that you would comfort them. That you would encourage them. That as they look at themselves. They would see in themselves.

The work. Of the Holy Spirit. That they really are repenting and believing. They really do love God's people. Don't let Satan.

Keep any of your children. Distressed. And depressed. And unsure. And unclear. Lord. Give them. Confidence.

And knowing. That they are your children. And let them go in the strength of that. And let them go in the glory of that. Rejoicing. And what you've done for them. Father.

I pray that you would help us. To hold on to the gospel. This evening. Tomorrow morning. All the rest of the days of the week. That we would come again.

[41:37] This coming Lord's Day. And have lived a gospel saturated week. Full of Jesus. Full of the gospel. Full of repenting. And believing.

And loving. And feeling. For him. That we would be full of worship. Full of praise. Will you send us on our way rejoicing. In Jesus name.

Amen.