



This Changes Everything!

1 John 2:3-11

We are studying 1 John, and what I want to share with you today is perhaps the most important thing you will ever hear about this book; in fact it may change everything you understand about Christianity in general. There are many people who do not understand what Christianity is about and it has to do with what I am going to share with you today.

1 John 5:13 ¹³ *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

This is the reason John wrote the book. It is written to those who believe in the name of the Son of God so that they may know that they have eternal life. John is very clear about this. HOW does a person get eternal life? Connected with God? BY *Believing in Jesus Christ*.

AND when you believe and enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ, when Christ comes to live in your life, then you will exhibit certain “marks”. And that’s what this book talks about.

There are three things I want you to understand about these “marks”.

Can everybody that has one, take out a “newer” style \$20 bill. I’m sure you’ve noticed that they have all kinds of anti-counterfeiting things on it. They’ve got colors. The number “twenty” down here is in a kind of a gold paint. They’ve got a blue eagle over here and if you hold it up to the light you can see another picture of Andrew Jackson over here. It’s called a watermark. Has anybody else seen these? So, if you have a twenty dollar bill and if someone gives you a new twenty dollar bill now you have a lot of

ways to tell whether it’s good. You can hold it up to light and if it’s been a copy then you’ll see all kinds of things missing. The true bill has a lot of things on it that you can see.

Now, in the first century church, as we have already seen in our brief study so far of 1 John, there were counterfeits. There were people running around who talked a good story, who said the right things, who said things that sounded awfully spiritual, but they were fakes. John has already pointed out that there are *tests* that we can apply, not just to what people say but to what people **do**. He is holding the faith of these people up to the light to see if there are certain **identifying marks** in their lives that mark them out as a believer.

Now this fact, these facts can cut two ways.

One, if a person is all talk and no action he is identified, to his dismay, as someone who is out of relationship with God.

But, if we look at our lives and say, “You know, I see these marks. I see that watermark. I see that plastic strip. I see that particular color. I see that gold paint,” it is very encouraging because you know that you are in fellowship with God.

1. First Thing - marks distinguish real from counterfeit.

Go back to 2:3. Notice the phrase “we know”. This if the first of 16 verses that we will find this phrase in. And in at least eight of them, it is referring to some way that we can know if we are truly in a relationship with God.

1 John 2:3 ³ *We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.*

1 John 3:10 ¹⁰ *This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.*

1 John 3:14 ¹⁴ *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.*

1 John 4:13 ¹³ *We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.*

So, these are the marks or tests of whether we are true believers. OK so far? Now I need to make a second very important distinction.

Just this week my middle son, Tom, completed his senior engineering design project. His group was given the challenge of finding a way to accurately measure the flow of water in add anything to the water to change its purity or its makeup. tubes that are just over microscopic. Too small for any kind of traditional flow meter. In addition they could not

They did it by shooting a low power laser beam through the tube at Point A, creating a heated slug of water. Then they measured how long it took the heated slug to pass down the tube to a certain Point B, thus finding the flow rate of the water. There were many complications to this, but the point I want to make is that they measured one quantity (temperature of water) in order to get at another quantity (the flow rate). **By measuring one, they could discover the other.**

That illustrates perhaps the most important thing...

2. Marks distinguish the real from the fake, but **(second thing) he is NOT saying that they are what create that relationship.**

John's going to give us some great identifying marks and the first one in this section. **But get this first -- It is a real relationship with God that changes everything! And that comes by a faith commitment to Christ.** By believing, not doing.

It's easy to look at this book and say, "*Okay, here are the things I need to do in order to have a relationship with God.*" (and that is how many see Christianity)... **But these are marks, not conditions. These are characteristics that say if you are indeed in a right relationship with God, if He has brought you into His family, these are the things that are going to show up in your life.**

Look at verse 3, "*We know we have come to know Him if we obey His commands.*" What it doesn't say is, "*If we obey His commands, then we will come to know Him.*" If that was the case, we would be into a works righteousness. We would be earning our way into God's family instead of receiving it as a gift of grace and *then manifesting* the changes that are consistent with that grace at work in our lives.

Here's the Third Thing....

Have you ever watched *The Antiques Road Show*. One of the hardest things about the Antiques Road Show is when the guy brings in something he hopes is an antique, and the expert describes it with that worst of all words, '*reproduction.*' He's not talking about making babies. He's

saying, "This is an imitation, a fake. It's not the real thing." And the way they can tell is there are certain marks.

Some people can bring in something that looks like a Tiffany lamp, but the guy says, "A real Tiffany lamp shade always has a little "T" is on there and if it doesn't, it's not real." So, there are ways to tell counterfeits and there are ways to tell what's real and what's true.

OUR LIGHTS: Did you notice something about our lights? *They* have a little "T". Wow, we can sell them - a matched set of Tiffany Lamps - we can finish our building and hire out everything!]

3. No actually this illustrates the **third thing** I want you to understand about *marks*. **Just having the "mark" is not a guarantee of genuineness, BUT you can't have the genuine thing without the mark.**

That what 1 John is all about. Now let's dive into the passage.

V.3 It starts, "*We know.*" It means *security of knowledge*. This is what we know for sure.

During the winter here it can get pretty cloudy, and last awhile. But have you ever really wondered if the sun was up there or not? NO. You knew it was there, even if you couldn't see it. Because you know that the sun comes up every day, whether you see it or not. It always does.

And what do we know? John says? "*We know that we have come to know Him.*" It's the same word but it's in a different meaning, different tense - it's called the *perfect tense*. It means a *past event with an ongoing result*. The perfect tense is a great tense. It means - Here's something that has taken place in the past. Here it refers to the time when you came to know God -- when you were brought into a relationship with Him and the good news is that that relationship continues on. It is an ongoing relationship.

It's not one that started once, like a fourth grade romance and that ended two days later. We have come to know Him. We have come into a relationship of love with God that is going to have an impact in our lives. It is a miraculous transformation that has changed us from being God's enemies to being His friends. God has redeemed us and brought us into a relationship of love and acceptance and security.

Now, wouldn't everybody like to say that they had that kind of relationship with God? If you want to know if you do, here the first mark of it -- Verse 3 says, "*We know we have come to know Him,* [and now here's this 'if'] **if we obey His commands.**"

In other words, we have the security, assurance **because we have seen in our lives the change that has taken place so that the commands we once thought were ridiculous and stupid and life-destroying, we now learn to joyfully obey because God's work in our lives changes our understanding.**

We have come to learn that this God who we used to hate, we now love. And the commands that we used to disregard and hope that they were somebody else and 'not for me,' now become something we love.

What can explain the psalmist writing this, "*Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long.*" Does that sound like something a typical non-believer would say? No. This is a person who has been changed, who's understood that the God he hated and feared is in fact a God of tremendous love and has embraced him and brought him into fellowship with Him and he says, "*Man, I love Your law! The lights are on. The blinders are off and now I can see how wonderful Your commands are.*"

That statement is in stark contrast to **verse 4**, "*The man who says, 'I know Him,' but does not do what He commands is a liar.*" And in fact the man who says, "*I know Him. I have this relationship with Him,*" but manifests in his life no change – "I don't do what He commands. I don't listen to what He says. I just do what I want to and if I know that God is unhappy with that, oh well. That's the way it is." Actions tell the story.

- **If there is no relationship, then there is no trust.**
- **And if there is no trust, then there is no obedience.** That's the sign of it.

All of us with children have taught them that when a stranger drives up next to them and says, "*Hop in. Let's go for a ride,*" we tell them, "Don't even think about it. Run as fast as you can in the other direction." Why? Because there is no relationship there. It is a stranger. It is not someone who you are in relationship with, therefore there is a lack of trust there and we encourage their disobedience at that point. "Don't obey him."

But, if it's someone that they know, someone who knows the secret word, perhaps, that we've taught our children, then we say, "*Sure. Obey them.*"

Write this down. **Obedience comes from Relationship** (not other way around). And when we are in a relationship with God, a trusting, loving

relationship, it's going to show up. It's going to show up in obedience.

Verse 5 - "*If anyone obeys His word, God's love is truly made complete in him.*"

That word '*made complete*' is that powerful word that Jesus used on the cross when He said, "It is finished." *Tetelestai*. It is completed, finished, paid in full. It's also in the perfect tense. This is a work that has been started and will continue on.

The person who obeys God is a person in whom God is working. And there is going to be a growing obedience, a growing joy inside. It keeps growing until we begin to embrace that truth and say, "This is for me. This is right. This is what I want."

God's love for us changes us so that we will love and trust Him more and more. And with that growing change, as we see in our lives the impact of God's love for us, as we see in our lives that growing obedience, as we see in our lives that increasing power over temptation, we say, "Yeah. God's love is being made complete in me." And we have a growing security in that relationship.

[Verse 6] - Well, what does obedience look like? You know, there are a lot of ways we could go with this obedience thing. Maybe there are things that we find that are maybe acts of obedience that are easier for us, and some that are hard and maybe we put on the back shelf.

What's the model? What do we look at when we want to know what a life of obedience looks like? Look at **verse 6**, "*Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.*" Jesus is the model of a trust relationship with God.

Now this is important. You see, this whole passage is about *relationship*. In fact, this whole book is about relationship. **If you're in relationship with God, this is what's going to be evident in your life.** If you're not in relationship with God, *this* is what's going to be evident in your life.

If you're in relationship with God and He is at work in your life transforming you, here's the model of what you're going to begin to look like. This is not to say, "Okay, here's the model. I've got to pursue that. I've got to go after that."

The fact is that as we grow in our relationship with God, that desire to become like Christ becomes

the goal of our life. But again, be careful not to make this a rule instead of a relationship. It's a relationship with God that will play out itself out in the following of this particular model – the model of Jesus Christ.

Of course, whenever we use Jesus as a model, don't we all get a little nervous? Don't we all tend to just throw up our hands and say, "I can never achieve that, so let's just quit before we're ahead."

But ask yourself this question - How did Jesus walk? That's what we're looking at here is how Jesus walked.

- What were the foundational characteristics of His life?
- What was the goal of His life?
- What was the power source of His life?

And here's what it was: **The foundational characteristic of Jesus' life was that He was walking in a trust relationship with God.**

- What God told Him to say, He said.
- Who God told Him to minister to, He ministered to.
- What God told Him to do, He did; all the way to death on a cross.

Jesus walked by faith. The way Jesus walked is no different than the way we are all called to walk. He becomes then the model for the Christian walk.

Man or woman, boy or girl, old or young it doesn't matter -- we can all follow that foundational characteristic of Christ which is to say, "When Jesus says do this, I do it. When Jesus says speak to this person, I speak. When Jesus says turn away from that temptation, I turn away from it."

We usually tend to think of this almost exclusively in a negative way. "*Okay, obeying commands means I don't....*" and then we pull out our list. "*We don't smoke, chew and go with the girls that do. I don't do this. I don't do that.* And all these things that I don't do that is the Christian life."

And the question is: was that the Christian life that Jesus walked? And the answer is, well, there were plenty of things He didn't do. There were plenty of sins that He did not submit to. In fact, He never yielded to any temptation.

But I would never think of describing the life of Jesus by what he didn't do - but rather by what he DID DO.

Like, loving God, loving others, blessing those who curse us, putting the needs of others before our own, living by faith in God, taking our concerns to God in believing prayer, being generous, sharing the good news of Christ with others, making the will of God my passion. That's walking in the steps of Christ. All these spring from the transforming love of God in our lives.

When God changes someone then he will walk as Jesus did. A person who does not walk as Jesus did, in that faith relationship with God that changes him and makes him an other-oriented person, that person is not a part of the fellowship, the family of God.

CONCLUSION

Do you see it in your life?

Not that you're perfect, but that there's a growing ability to love, that there's a growing desire to love.

That there's a growing desire to say to God, "I love Your law. How I love what You've done in my life. I love how You've changed me in real, practical ways."

But maybe you have to say, "I have to admit it isn't there." You know what the good news is? It can be.

God has opened the door to a relationship with Him through the giving of His own Son. All the sins that stand between you and God can be forgiven and by God's grace put behind His back and, as He says in His Word, "*Your sins I will remember no more.*" That's available, not by being better but by putting your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and His death in your place on the cross.