

## **DO YOU REALLY KNOW?**

John gives us his purpose statement in writing in both the gospel of John and the Book of 1<sup>st</sup> John. In John 20:30-31, he tells us that he wrote so we might BELIEVE and have LIFE. In 1<sup>st</sup> John 5:13, he tells us that he wrote so that the believer might KNOW that they have eternal life. In doing this, John presents a series of “knowing tests”.

Of the series of “tests” brought out in 1<sup>st</sup> John, three of them are most clear in drawing the line between who is a true believer and who is not.

- A. The Obedience Test (1 Jn. 2:3-4).
- B. The Righteousness Test (1 Jn. 3:4-10).
- C. The Love Test (1 Jn. 2:7-11, 15-17; 3:11-17; 4:7-21).

### **THE OBEDIENCE TEST:**

#### **1 John 2:3–4 (NKJV)**

**3** Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

**4** He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Here is the most basic test of genuine Christianity – of genuine faith. Those who truly KNOW Christ characteristically keep His commandments in recognition of His LORDSHIP!

It doesn’t say they always obey as they should, but the point is that the tenor of their lives is one of obedience. The issue is not the perfection of one’s life as seen in 1 John 1:9 and 2:1, but it does alter the direction of one’s life. This is a main point in 1<sup>st</sup> John.

John consistently uses the idea of being a LIAR to specifically refer to those who PROFESS to know God, but in reality they don’t as evidenced by a lifestyle that habitually contradicts their profession (cf. John 8:33-44, 55; 1 Jn. 2:4, 4:20; Rev. 21:8). So, a LIAR (as defined by John) is one who claims to be a Christian, but in reality is a phony. But the point is they do PROFESS. They loudly affirm, “***I know Him***” but it is not true.

The assurance presented by John is not based on mere profession. It is not based on mere feelings or emotions. Rather, it is attached to observable evidence of continuing obedience to the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ. A profession of faith without any evidence of obedience is bogus.

“Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone.” – **John Calvin**

## **THE RIGHTEOUSNESS TEST:**

### **1 John 3:7–8 (NKJV)**

**7** Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

**8** He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Evidently, false teachers were saying that one can be a Christian and yet continue on in a lifestyle of sin. John, however, is saying that if you are truly born-again, you will not continue on in a lifestyle of habitual sin. Don't let anyone deceive you on this point.

For John, your "practice" tells on your person. Your character is related to your conduct. If you practice doing what is right in accordance with Jesus' standard (**just as He is righteous**), that gives evidence that you indeed are righteous.

The NT consistently shows that an empty profession that doesn't practice righteousness as the fruit is empty and disingenuous. ***"Doing is the test of being!"***

"If we do not have a belief that behaves, we probably do not have a 'salvation' that saves." - **John Phillips**

An ongoing pattern of sin is what characterizes the devil, and so if a person is characterized by an ongoing pattern of sin, they too are of the devil (cf. Jn. 8:44).

Note again the issue here is not occasional sin or the fact of sin, but rather an ongoing pattern of sin as a habitual way of life consistent with the devil's pattern. The devil not only sins continually, but when people belong to the devil, they too are defined by a continual, unbroken pattern of sin.

Jesus came to destroy the sin works of the devil in our lives. Jesus came to set us free from the devil so that we might now practice righteousness as a pattern of life instead of practicing sin.

## **THE LOVE TEST:**

### **1 John 3:23 (NKJV)**

**23** And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

Here we have a summary statement that, in effect, is a sort of creedal statement. John boils the core essence of Christianity down to this. At core, this is what God commands. Note that John states this as ONE commandment, although two principal things are in view. He states it this way because these two are inseparable. Where you have one, you have the other. It is a case of the two becoming ONE, so to speak. In other words, where you have true faith, there will be true love. And where brotherly Christian love is, there will be true faith (cf. Gal. 5:6).

### **1 John 4:7–8 (NKJV)**

**7** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

**8** He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

We are not born-again by loving, but because we are born of God, we have His love dwelling in us. This kind of love is an identifying mark of true believers.

### ***JOHN'S PURPOSE STATEMENT:***

### **1 John 5:13 (ESV)**

**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.

The word ***believe*** in 1 John 5:13 is in the **present tense**, signifying ongoing, continuous belief. To believe in the NAME of the Son of God is to believe in His full PERSON. I have great concern about the view that emphasizes Christ's finished work but is weak on His PERSON. To emphasize the finished work of Christ but not His PERSON is to preach a half gospel, which is a most serious omission. John does not do this in the gospel of John nor in the epistle of 1<sup>st</sup> John (cf. John 20:30-31). These things are written to those who believe in the PERSON of the Son of God. They have embraced Him as Lord God as well as Savior (cf. 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10).

In the surrounding context, John ties believing with being born of God as seen in 5:1. This being born of God is really the key thrust of the entire book. Believing is conjoined with being born of God. However, this belief then does not stand in isolation.

It has ushered in the life of God, and the reality of being born of God is also explicitly tied to obedience and love as developed in the book (cf. 1 Jn. 2:29, 4:7). Out of being born-again flows the practice of righteousness and agape love.

1 John 5:13 does not stand in isolation but builds on the previous contents of the entire letter.

The KNOWING of believing in 5:13 must not be divorced from the KNOWING of obedience in 2:3-4, and the KNOWING of loving the brethren in 1 Jn. 3:14. Yes, by all means memorize 1 John 5:13, but realize the assurance it emphasizes should be understood through the grid of 1 John 1:1- 5:12. This is the proper framework of assurance as intended by John.

Believing cannot be severed from being born of God and the transformed life it ushers in. One must have the right kind of faith; it must be in the right object (the Lord Jesus Christ), and it must be from the heart. When that is in place, the fruit of obedience and love will follow, and so will the assurance that John affirms.

“The assurance John has in view is not the result of wishful thinking but is firmly grounded in the varied evidences set forth in the epistle.” – **Edmond Hiebert**, *THE EPISTLES OF JOHN*, p. 252