

# Obeying from Love

**SESSION IN A SENTENCE:** Jesus' work in securing our salvation gives His people ample cause to love Him and obey Him.

**BACKGROUND PASSAGE:** 1 John

We live in an age when we can access news about world events with the tap of a finger. But along with this access, we can easily receive information some would label as “fake,” as unverifiable or even fabricated, which makes it difficult to know whether or not our information and our conclusions are true or false. On top of that, social media piles on perspectives and opinions about situations from various points of view. In this context, how are we supposed to know whether reported and shared facts are indeed facts or just another example of “fake news”?




When you search for information regarding issues of faith in God, how do you determine the difference between “fake news” and truth?

# Group Time

## Point 1: Obeying Jesus comes from remembering His completed work (1 John 2:1-2).

<sup>1</sup> My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous one. <sup>2</sup> He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

John proclaimed that God is light and there is absolutely no darkness in Him (1:5). This metaphorical language has a moral quality to it: Light means righteousness, and darkness means sin. He began his letter with the truth that God is holy—without sin—because this impacts how we interact with Him. If we say we have fellowship with God but walk in darkness—in sin—then we are liars and do not practice the truth (1:6). We cannot to say one thing and then do another. So John’s hope throughout his letter is that we would not sin.

 If sin is so wrong, why do we sin?

John didn’t want people to sin, but he also wasn’t naïve about the human condition, which led him to bring up the gospel. Some people falsely claim to have no sin at all, in their past or in their present (1 John 1:8,10). John called them liars. Nobody can say they do not sin. But our hope for a relationship with God is not based on our sin or the lack thereof—it’s based on Jesus, the only righteous One. If we believe in Him, He becomes our advocate before God our Father, and His plea on our behalf, whenever we sin, is the sacrifice He made of Himself on the cross for us. This, in turn, encourages us to resist sin and obey our Savior.

**Christ as Propitiation:** Because of God’s righteousness and \_\_\_\_\_, humanity’s sins must be atoned for in order for people to be \_\_\_\_\_ to God. As the propitiation for sins, Christ’s \_\_\_\_\_ is the appeasement or satisfaction of God’s wrath against sin.

## Point 2: Obeying Jesus comes from knowing Him (1 John 2:3-4).

<sup>3</sup> This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands. <sup>4</sup> The one who says, “I have come to know him,” and yet doesn’t keep his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

John began this letter by reminding his children in the faith of his own real-life experience with Jesus Christ. He had seen Jesus and touched Jesus’ human body with his own hands. In other words, Jesus was not simply a spirit; He was human and alive. Additionally, John and the disciples heard Jesus’ voice as He taught, confronted, and gave commands. These weren’t ordinary words but words of truth and eternal life—words to obey. If we say we have come to know Jesus but our actions tell a different story, then we are liars and without the truth. In fact, it appears to be impossible to know Jesus by faith and not be willing to obey Him.


### Voices from the Church

“On the one hand, the person who keeps the commands can have confidence that he knows and abides in God. On the other hand, the one who claims to know God but does not keep the commands proves himself to be a liar. John does not envisage the possibility where one can know God and not live in a manner pleasing to Him.”<sup>1</sup>

—Christopher Bass

 What are some attributes Jesus helps us to know about God?

If we know Jesus by faith, then we will keep His commandments. So what are they? Well, right near the top is the command to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:39; Lev. 19:18). John condemned hatred for our brothers and sisters in Christ because hate lurks in the darkness and is not from God, which we would know if we know God at all (1 John 2:7-11). God is love, and He has loved us in and through the sacrifice of Christ, His one and only Son. If we know we have been loved in this amazing fashion, then how could we withhold our love from others? Believers who live in the light and in the truth can’t and won’t withhold God’s love

 In addition to loving one another, what are some other commands believers should obey because they know God?

### Point 3: Obeying Jesus comes from loving Him (1 John 2:5-6).

<sup>5</sup> But whoever keeps his word, truly in him the love of God is made complete. This is how we know we are in him: <sup>6</sup> The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked.

If you find it hard to believe that God loves you because of who He is—holy—and that He accepts you—a sinner—completely on the basis of what Jesus did for us, you are not alone. Many of us find it difficult to believe or understand unconditional love and unmerited favor. By nature, we want to earn our keep. We want to know exactly what is expected of us so we can merit the relationship bestowed upon us. But that isn't how love works. We love because God first loved us (4:19). Because of God's love shown to us in Jesus on the cross, we obey as we love others, and even more importantly, we obey because we love God in return.



What are some motives other than love for God that might fuel our “acts of obedience”?

Knowing God, knowing His love for us in Christ, must work itself out in our lives as love for God and love for others. When believers keep Jesus' commands from a motive of love, then we can have assurance that we are in Christ by faith and saved from our sins. We can see that God's love is accomplishing its purpose in our lives. Believers grow in this regard as they mature in the faith. We call this *sanctification*, and God does this work in us through the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. The Spirit assures believers of their adoption into God's family and helps us to walk as Jesus walked—in loving obedience to God the Father (3:24; 4:11-13).

# My Mission

Because Christ's obedience to the Father has brought about our salvation, we obey Christ's command to love others as we seek ways to provide for others in need.

- **What steps will you take to know Jesus and His love more deeply?**
- **What are some specific ways you can demonstrate love for one another within your group and for your physical neighbors?**
- **How will the teaching of 1 John inform the way you present and commend the gospel to others in both word and deed?**



## Voices from Church History

“Therefore everything which Christ has is ours, graciously bestowed on us unworthy men out of God’s sheer mercy, although we have rather deserved wrath and condemnation, and hell also. Even Christ himself, therefore, who says he came to do the most sacred will of the Father [John 6:38], became obedient to him; and whatever he did, he did it for us and desired it to be ours.”<sup>2</sup>

—Martin Luther (1483-1546)

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# Daily Study

## Day 1: Read 1 John 1:1–2:2

Understanding the depth and breadth of the gospel cannot happen until we have received Jesus Christ's death on the cross as payment for our sin. It is the result of a lifelong journey that starts with God's love and begins because of God's initiative.

The apostle John was able to speak about God's love on a simple level, in a way that anyone can understand. In John's Gospel, we find this famous summary of the gospel: "For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). But John also communicated some of the depth of God's love, for example, in how it effectively deals with our fear: "There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears is not complete in love" (1 John 4:18).

Wherever you are on the journey of faith, God invites you to get to know Him and to understand His love more and more.



What are some ways you have recognized and experienced the reality of God and His love over the past few weeks and months?

### Voices from the Church

"The gospel is that Christ has suffered the full wrath of God for my sin. Jesus Christ traded places with me, living the perfect life I should have lived, and dying the death I had been condemned to die."<sup>3</sup>

—J. D. Greear

## Day 2: Read 1 John 2:3-6

We take an important step toward getting to know God better when we read the Bible. As we spend time in the Word of God, we get to hear from Him firsthand. We learn what it means to follow Jesus and to walk in obedience to His commandments. Through the apostle John's words, Jesus encourages us to remain in Him—that is, to stay near to Him—and get to know Him better. This is possible through reading the Bible.

Nowadays we can access the Bible virtually wherever we are by downloading a Bible app, listening to an audio Bible, or simply carrying a small Bible with us. One initiative we can each pursue is to take fifteen minutes a day to read or listen to the Bible. You can start by setting an alarm or carving out time in your daily calendar. Try to begin a better routine when it comes to your Bible intake by reading all five chapters of 1 John during your next sitting.



What are some good reasons to develop a plan for regularly reading the Bible?

## Day 3: Read 1 John 2:7-14

Notice that John reminds us of two important commandments: Walk in the light and love one another. Love for others is the overflow of remaining in Christ. Love drives the darkness away and allows the true light to shine.

In this passage, we learn a little bit more about the people to whom John was writing—he called them little children, fathers, and young men—all of whom he addressed with the affection of a pastor. He reminded them, and us, of the Father's love that is found in God's forgiveness of sins and in our victory over evil and the evil one.

This passage of the letter contains a lot of contrasts: old and new, light and dark, truth and deception, love and hate. And one more: We either remain in Jesus and possess life or remain on the path to death.




How do the contrasting images and concepts shed light on what it means to walk in the light and to love one another?

## Day 4: Read 1 John 2:15-17

This short passage gives us insight by contrasting love for the Father with a love for the world, a recurring theme throughout this letter. In 1 John 3:13, we learn that the world hates us. The world is where “fake news” about Jesus germinates and deceives us into thinking that we are much better off with material wealth and self-directed freedom. The world encourages instant gratification and self-centeredness.

As John reminds us, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possessions are not from the Father. In fact, God invites us into a relationship of love and forgiveness that lasts forever, whereas the world promises short-lived, empty, and fleeting satisfaction. John’s letter ends with a powerful warning in this same vein: “Little children, guard yourselves from idols” (5:21).


Whenever we face temptation (and we will), we can bring even our darkest thoughts into the light of God’s love. Remember, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous One (2:1).

 What are some ways you are tempted to think like the world does, and what can you do to combat this sort of thinking?

## Day 5: Read 1 John 2:18–5:21

Our lives in Christ are meant to stand out as completely different from the world around us. Consider this portion from John’s letter: “This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has this world’s goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God’s love reside in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth” (3:16-18).

Eternal life, for the apostle John, was not an ethereal, “pie in the sky” notion of the afterlife. Instead, he knew eternal life manifests itself in the lives and actions of believers in the form of steadfast belief in the true Jesus and sacrificial love for others.

 Based on all that you have learned from 1 John, what does it mean for you to lay down your life for those around you using both your words and your actions?



# Encourage One Another

*Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.*

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Obeying Jesus comes from remembering His completed work (1 John 2:1-2).
- Obeying Jesus comes from knowing Him (1 John 2:3-4).
- Obeying Jesus comes from loving Him (1 John 2:5-6).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



How does understanding the forgiveness you've received in Christ motivate you to obey God's commands?



What steps can you take to love your physical neighbors in practical and tangible ways this week?

## Notes

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