

How to Know You Know God

1 John 5:1-5

D. James Kennedy said, “Assurance is having confidence of eternal life that is resting upon the sure foundation of Jesus Christ, but presumption is presuming ourselves to have eternal life when in fact our confidence is based on nothing more than the flimsy foundation of our own self-righteousness.”

Do you have assurance in your relationship with God? Do you know, for sure, that you know God?

Today we come in our study of 1 John to the last chapter. In first four chapters John dealt with the themes of fellowship, truth, righteousness, and love. Remember that fellowship is sharing life of Jesus Christ, abiding in Him. That fellowship expresses itself in the other three themes, by living in truth, living in righteousness, and living in love. Now John concludes with the theme of assurance, how we know that we know. And we will find here the same three themes, love, righteousness and truth. These are the marks of relationship with Jesus Christ and close fellowship with Him and with His family.

John starts this chapter by stating, **“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”** What does it mean to be born of God? To be born of God means to have a living relationship with God, not just to be physically alive but to be spiritually alive. And only the Spirit of God can make us spiritually alive. Jesus said this to a religious man named Nicodemus in John 3:3, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”** When Nicodemus couldn’t understand what Jesus mean by **“born again”** He explained, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”**

Jesus was showing Nicodemus that there are two kinds of birth and two kinds of life. There is a physical birth that He describes as **“born of water”** and **“born of the flesh.”** And there is a spiritual birth that Jesus describes as being **“born of the Spirit.”** So a living relationship with God means to be **“born again,” “born of the Spirit,”** and **“born of God.”**

Now how does this new spiritual birth come about? John says here in 1 John 5:1, **“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”** The new birth comes by faith, by believing in Jesus Christ. John says in his gospel, **“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”** (John 1:12-13). Who is born of God? **“as many as received Him,” “to those who believe in His name.”**

It was in the same conversation with Nicodemus that Jesus said the famous words of John 3:16, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”** Believe in Him. Sounds easy doesn’t it? And it is when God calls you and enables you to believe. But belief is more than just agreeing that Jesus is the Christ. It’s more than just intellectual assent. Biblical belief means to trust, to commit to, to rely upon. The great preacher Charles Spurgeon said, *“Faith is not the easy and light thing men think. Far are we from ascribing salvation to the profession of a mere creed, we loathe the idea; neither do we ascribe salvation to a fond persuasion, but we do ascribe salvation to Jesus Christ, and the obtaining of it to that simple, child like confidence which lovingly casts itself into*

the arms of him who gave both his hands to the nail and suffered to the death for the sins of his people... You are born again if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, if you are relying upon a crucified Saviour you are assuredly begotten again unto a lively hope. Mystery or no mystery, the new birth is yours if you are a believer."

We're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper this morning. And we need to begin preparing our hearts. Before we come to the Lord's table we need to have the assurance of our relationship with the Lord nailed down. We need to KNOW that we are born again, that our sins have been forgiven, and that we are in a right relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ. And we need to be in a right relationship with each other. Our life should be demonstrating the important elements of knowing God: *love* to God and one another, righteousness expressed through *obedience* and truth lived out by *faith*.

So the first evidence that you are a believer, that you are born again into the family of God is that you:

I. Love God's Family (v.1).

A. A Divine Commandment: Love Your Brother. (1 John 4:21)

"And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."

1. These first verses in chapter 5 are a continuation of the last thought in chapter 4. The "**commandment**" God has given us is that "**he who loves God must love his brother also.**"

2. At the last supper as John leaned on Jesus breast, the Lord said, "**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another**" (Jn.13:34).

B. A Family Principle: To Love God is to Love God's Kids.

1. John further says, "**Everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.**" The NCV offers a clearer translation for us, "**whoever loves the Father also loves the Father's children.**" *If you love God, you will love God's kids.*

2. We are to love ALL God's Children, all believers. How often many Christians think that God only smiles on their little group or denomination. If we only love people who look like us and believe exactly what we believe, we won't love many people.

3. If we fail to love our brothers and sisters in Christ, we have cut off any possibility of intimacy with God. If we are not acting in love toward other believers we are not abiding in love with God. John said in 4:20 that the one who says he loves God but hates his brother is a "**liar.**"

4. Satan loves to bring divisions between Christians because he knows that if we are out of fellowship with each other we will be out of fellowship with God.

5. We know we love God because we choose to act in love toward other believers. Are not suppose to be any "Lone Ranger" Christians, even the Lone Ranger had Tonto. You need other believers to be sure you are loving God.

6. Someone might say, "**I love God but I don't care much for the establishment of the church.**" The real church is not an establishment, it's not an institution and

it's not a building. It is the loving fellowship of brothers and sisters in God's family. If you love God you must love God's people. And where are God's people gathered together? The Church. You cannot be pro-Christ and anti-church!

7. How do you know you love golf? You play. How do you know you love reading? You read. How do you know you love ice cream? You eat it. How do you know you love God? You love His people.

8. We measure our love for God by our love for His children. God has ordained that our love for Him be tested by people. Sometimes God strategically places people in your path that are hard to love. I think He likes to put bad drivers around me! It gives me an opportunity to act in love.

The second evidence of a believer who is born of God is that you:

II. Obey God's Commandments (vv.2-3).

A. The Test of Love is Obeying God's Commandments (v.2).

1. In v.1 we learn that we know we love God when we love His children. In v.2 we learn that **"we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments."** John brings it around full circle.
2. Obedience is the proof that we love God. When you obey God in relationship to God's children, you love them and this demonstrates that you love God and you have intimacy with Him.
3. His command to obey is that we act in love toward one another.
4. God has so designed this life that until Christians decide to love one another, they will never have intimacy with God. If you want to be close to God, don't bounce around from church to church without making a commitment. Find a biblical fellowship of believers and commit to love them with your life. Love takes the initiative. Biblical love looks for a way to involve itself in others.
5. I cannot have intimacy with God unless I love you. However, when I decide to act in love toward you, I keep His **"commandment"** in relationship to you and prove that I love Him because I have just loved you. Then His love spills out in my heart and I have deep, abiding, intimate fellowship with Him!

My name is Richard Sipes. My father's name is Jerry Sipes. By relationship, I am his son. His blood courses through my veins. I have his genetic code. Nothing can change the fact that I am his son. However, I learned very early in life that if I did not obey my father, it strained our relationship. I would lose fellowship with Him. As long as I did what he wanted me to do, we lived in harmony. When I disobeyed, harmony was broken, sometimes right on the seat of my pants! Nothing could change my relationship as his son but disobedience could change my fellowship with my father. So it is with God.

B. Obeying God's Commandment is not Hard (v.3).

1. In v.3, John says God's **"commandments are not burdensome."** **"Burdensome"** means "heavy, weighty." God never meant obedience to be a weight around our necks.
2. If you think obeying God is hard or **"burdensome"**, you have misunderstood. You need to mature in your faith.

When I was growing up, I thought my parents were strict. They expected good grades. They

required me to do chores. They made me go to bed at a certain time. Later, I had to be home by a certain time. Sometimes as a kid, I thought they just didn't want me to have much fun. As I matured, I learned that what I had perceived as strictness was really love. Because they loved me they had rules to protect me and discipline to correct me. Everything they did was done in love. However, I had to grow up before I could understand that. In other words, *maturity taught me that it is best to obey.*

3. When you mature in your understanding of God's love for you, you don't struggle with what He wants you to do because you realize He has your best interest at heart. God has nothing to gain by making you miserable.
4. Some Christians are miserable because they've spent so much time struggling to do things their way, so much time fighting God they've never learned the joy of obedience.
6. The key to a closer walk with God is to obey Him, to do what you know He wants you to do, to love who He wants you to love.

J. Stuart Holden wrote of being shown through a large factory where hundreds of looms were spinning very fine linen thread. The manager of the mill said, "**So delicate is this machinery that if a single thread of the entire 30,000, which at this moment are being woven, should break, all of these looms would instantly stop.**" He stepped to one of the machines and broke a thread. Suddenly every loom was still until the thread was rejoined. In the same way, it is through one act of disobedience that the blessings of our fellowship with Him are stopped. Not until that thread is rejoined will the joy of the Lord flow again in our hearts. *Is there a broken thread in your life?*

The third evidence of a believer who is born of God is that he will:

III. Act in Faith (vv.4-5).

A. All God's Children are Overcomers.

1. These last two verses contain one of the most powerful principles in the Bible. If you will apply what you are about to learn, this principle will literally change your life and set you free.
2. In vv.4-5 we see the word "**overcome**" or "**overcomes**" three times. We see it twice in v.4, once in the present tense ["**overcomes**"] and once in the past tense ["**has overcome**"].
3. As believers who are "**born of God**" we are right now overcoming the world because we have already overcome it.
4. "**Overcome**" is from *nikao* meaning "to conquer, prevail, gain victory." Why does the world need to be "**overcome**?" The world system is controlled by Satan (**v.19**). The world system wants to overcome you to keep you from knowing God's presence, experiencing God's power and pursuing God's purpose. The world wants to keep you from abiding in Christ and maturing as a believer. The world wants to destroy your spiritual life.
5. Most Christians don't understand or don't believe that they have already "**overcome the world.**" We don't have to look for "**victory**" because we already have "**victory.**"
6. When Jesus died and rose again, He overcame the enemy. He broke the power of sin. The empty tomb is the sign of "**victory.**" When you were "**born of God**"

the Spirit of Christ came to live in you, the mind of Christ was made available to you and the power of Christ was given to you! The winner of the cosmic battle is within you and because He has overcome, you can overcome. Because He is a winner, you are a winner! Your life is wrapped up in Jesus Christ. You "sit" with Him in "**heavenly places**."

7. We don't have to fight the world to attain "**victory**" we just have to walk in the "**victory**" that is already ours through Christ. His power, authority and resources are already ours!

B. Our Faith Frees Us from Bondage.

1. Our belief always determines our behavior. If you believe you are who the Bible says you are, you can have victory. John says, "**this is the victory that overcomes the world - our faith**."

You might ask, "**If faith is the victory, why do I feel so overcome?**" In a few moments you will go out into the parking lot and put your keys into the ignition switch. If you don't turn the switch, the ignition will not start the motor and you will go nowhere. Faith is the ignition switch and God's power is the motor. If you are "**born of God**" you already have all the faith and all the power you need. The reason you are going nowhere in your spiritual life, the reason the world is overcoming you is because you've not turned over the ignition. You sit behind the wheel and wonder why you are at a standstill when all you need to do is turn the key.

Here are some acronyms for "faith" that might help us understand what believing really is...

FAITH

Forsaking
All
I
Trust (Take)
Him

FAITH

Full
Assurance
In
The
Highest

FAITH

Fast
Actions
In
True
Hope

FAITH

Fantastic
Adventure
In
Trusting
Him

FAITH

Forgiveness (From God)
Available (To All)
Impossible (Without Jesus)
Turn (Away from Sin)
Heaven (Eternal Home)

3. Remember when David faced Goliath? Saul was armed with swords and shields and held back by unbelief. David was armed with only a sling and five rocks but he knew he believed in a great victorious God. ***FAITH IS THE VICTORY!***

4. Many Christians say they need more faith. People sometimes say to me, "**Pastor if I just had your faith...**" We already have all the faith we need. We must exercise it! V.5 says "**he who overcomes the world**" is "**he who believes**."

As we prepare for the Lord's Supper today you need to get your relationship with God right.

Are you sure you are born of God? Have you believed in Jesus Christ, trusted in Him to save you from your sin and give you eternal life? If not, today, put your faith in Jesus. Trust Him to save you. Stop relying on yourself. Entrust yourself to Jesus.

If you have been born again, it will show by how you love God's family, obey God's word, and act in overcoming faith. Righteousness, truth and love are the birthmarks of God's kids.