

# Knowing That We Know

1 John 2:3-14

## Knowing That We Know God

Many people say that they “know God.” We might ask: How do they *know* that they know God? How might others know that they know God?<sup>1</sup> Can such claims be tested?<sup>2</sup> Read 1 John 2:3-6.

Whoever says ...	Is ...	But ...	
“I know God,” but does not do what he commands	a liar, and the truth is not in them (v.4)	If anyone obeys God’s word	the love of God is truly made complete in them (v.5)

## Test of Obedience

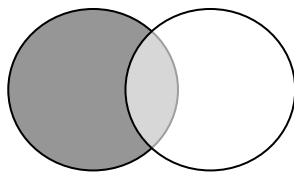
- ☞ “We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands” (1 John 2:3, NIV).
- ☞ “This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (1 John 2:5b-6, NIV84).<sup>3</sup>

1. Which of the following statements do you think is most consistent with the Bible’s teaching?
  - (a) A person gains (or earns) a relationship with God by obeying his word (the Bible).
  - (b) A person gains a relationship with God through *spiritual* knowledge. Thus the actions of the physical body are not necessarily important to knowing God.
  - (c) A person enters into a relationship with God by His grace. Since this is entirely God’s work, the person’s obedience is not necessarily a characteristic of truly knowing God.<sup>4</sup>
  - (d) A person enters into a relationship with God by His grace, through faith, not by his/her own efforts. However, the person’s obedience *is* a characteristic of truly knowing God.

## An Old but New Command

Read 1 John 2:7-8. Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another” (John 13:34a). When John wrote his letter (many years later), this “new command” was an “old command.” His readers had heard it many times. But in another sense, it was still “new,” being lived out through Jesus and his followers in the dawning of the “new age,” inaugurated by the “true light” (Jesus).

**Present Age**  
(characterized by  
darkness)



**Age to Come** (characterized by Light)  
*The “age to come” has broken into the  
“present age” with the first coming of Jesus.*

<sup>1</sup> We are not assigned to determine the genuineness of another person’s faith, but Jesus told us to watch out for ‘wolves in sheep’s clothing,’ and he said, ‘by their fruit you will recognize them’ (Matthew 7:15-20).

<sup>2</sup> Of course, these questions assume that there *is* a God that can be ‘known.’ More particularly, these questions assume that ‘God’ is the God of the Bible. In this lesson, the word ‘test’ does not mean ‘entrance test’ – that is, something that must be passed to enter into a relationship with God. A relationship with God cannot be earned! It is a gift of grace. Rather, ‘test’ refers to something that shows (provides evidence) that one knows God.

<sup>3</sup> Being ‘in him’ is another description of ‘knowing him.’ To be ‘in Christ’ is to live in spiritual union with Christ (see John 15:1-17). To ‘walk as Jesus did’ is to follow Jesus’ example of obedience (John 15:10).

<sup>4</sup> Calling this statement ‘false’ may be controversial to some. Definition of terms and concepts is essential to sound evaluation (e.g. definition of ‘relationship,’ and consideration of levels of obedience and knowledge). In any case, (d) is more consistent with the teaching of 1 John in the context of the whole Bible (also see James 2:14-26).

## Test of Love

The test of obedience is also the test of love. Read 1 John 2:9-11.<sup>5</sup>

Anyone who claims to be...	Is...	But ...	
in the light, <sup>6</sup> but hates a brother or sister <sup>7</sup>	still in the darkness (v.9)	Anyone who loves their brother and sister	lives in the light, and there is nothing in them (or it) to make them stumble (v.10)
Anyone who... hates a brother or sister	in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going because the darkness has blinded them (v.11)		

- Why is a hateful person still in the darkness?<sup>8</sup>
- In what way does already being in darkness or light contribute to further darkness or light?

📖 “The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.” (*Proverbs 4:18-19, NIV*)

- Why should obedience and love be evident in the Christian’s life? What do you think motivates the believer to obey God and love others?
- How can we obey and love in the way God commands?<sup>9</sup> What do we need to do?

## Assurance to Believers

The false faith of some is exposed by the tests of obedience and love. But that is not John’s only purpose. He also wants to confirm the assurance of genuine believers. Read 1 John 2:12-14.

### Reflection/Application

- Do you “know God?” If not, do you *want* to know God? Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (*John 14:6b*). Trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, and follow him.
- If you claim to know God, does your life *show* that you know God? Are you reading God’s word (the Bible) and obeying his instructions? Are you showing love to others? What are your motivations for obedience and love? Commit to knowing God more intimately (through his Word, prayer, praise, fellowship and service) with a desire to be motivated by God’s love.

<sup>5</sup> John considers two categories – hate and love, with no alternatives. We might want to add different *degrees* of hate and love, or at least, neutrality. However, John requires us to identify our attitudes/actions with either love or hate.

<sup>6</sup> Being ‘in the light’ is another description of ‘knowing God.’ If we ‘walk in the light,’ we have ‘fellowship’ with God (*1 John 1:3-7*). ‘Fellowship with God’ and ‘knowing God’ are alternative ways of expressing the same reality.

<sup>7</sup> Literally ‘brother,’ which usually means fellow Christian. Thus it applies to both males and females (‘sisters’) as the NIV translates. The command to love is not limited to fellow Christians, but extends beyond the family of God.

<sup>8</sup> Those who ‘walk in darkness’ avoid, reject, or fail to respond to God’s illumination and guidance.

<sup>9</sup> We will discuss this more fully when we study 1 John 4:7-21 in lesson 8.