

What Can We Know?

1 John 5:13-21

Purpose of John's Letter

1. Read 1 John 5:13. In verse 13, John states a purpose of his letter. What is that purpose?



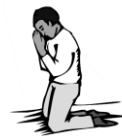
2. What “things”¹ has John already written to help us know that we (as true Christians) have eternal life?²

Some of “these things” include the following:

- We know that we have come to know him if we _____ (2:3).
- We know that we have passed from death to life, because we _____ (3:14).
- If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the _____, God lives in them and they in God (4:15).
- We know [that God lives in us] by the _____ he gave us (3:24b).

Concerning Prayer

3. Read 1 John 5:14-15. What can we know concerning prayer (vv. 14-15)?³



- Jesus said*, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” (John 15:7, NIV).
- Jesus prayed to the Father*, “Yet not what I will, but what you will” (Mark 14:36b).
- Jesus said*, “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...’” (Matthew 6:9-10, NIV)

¹ The phrase ‘these things’ most likely refers to everything that John has written so far in his letter.

² ‘eternal life’ is everlasting spiritual life in union with God who is the Source of life and blessing. It is the highest quality of existence, especially in its final state in the new creation. Eternal life begins when a person is ‘born of God,’ which happens by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ, *not* by good works. However, good works are evidence that a person has truly become a child of God, and thus they help to assure us that we have eternal life.

³ As a follow-up question: *How* are we able to “ask...according to [God’s] will”?

- ❑ Read 1 John 5:16-17. These verses specify one kind of prayer that can be offered with confidence. We should pray for ‘brothers and sisters’ who have fallen into sin – that they would become aware of their sin, repent (turn from sin) and submit their lives to Jesus Christ, who is the Life.⁴

What Else Can We Know?

John concludes his letter with three statements of certainty (*verses 18-21*), each beginning with “We know ...” Read 1 John 5:18-21.

4. The first two statements of certainty (*verses 18-19*) concern the true Christian’s relationship to sin,⁵ the world, and the “evil one.”⁶ How do these verses both caution and assure the Christian?

5. How does the coming of God’s Son enable us to know the true God? (*v. 20*)



6. Why do you think John finishes his letter with verse 21? How can we keep ourselves from idols?⁷

Reflection/Application

- Do you know that you have eternal life?
- Do you have faith in the Son of God? If you say “no,” what are the specific reasons why you do not accept the testimony concerning Jesus Christ? Continue to seek the truth concerning Jesus. If you say “yes,” does your life show that you have been born of God?
- This week, read the entire book of 1 John, and reflect on its application to your life.

⁴ ‘sin’ can be defined as any attitude and action that is opposed to God. There are various interpretations of ‘a sin that leads to death,’ including (1) a sin that leads to physical death (*Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 11:30*); (2) the unrepentant sin and rejection of the truth characterized by the false teachers (e.g., denial of Christ’s incarnation, deliberate disobedience, hating one’s brother); and (3) apostasy (i.e., denial of Christ and renunciation of the faith, *if possible* for a true believer). In this context, interpretation (2) is preferred. While John is not here concerned with prayer for those who steadfastly reject Christ and refuse to repent (*5:16c*), such prayer is not prohibited. However, it is clear that Christians should pray for ‘brothers and sisters’ who have fallen into sin – that they would become aware of their sin, repent (turn from sin) and submit their lives to Jesus Christ, who is the Life.

⁵ ‘does not continue to sin’ does not mean that true Christians never sin at all. But as true Christians, we must desire to live godly lives. As new creatures indwelt by the Spirit, we must hate sin and evil; and avoid habitual, deliberate sin. Furthermore, the true child of God is freed and ‘kept safe’ from the evil one’s controlling power (*5:18*).

⁶ The ‘evil one’ is Satan - the devil, who is called ‘the prince of this world’ (*John 12:31, 14:30*).

⁷ In general, an ‘idol’ is a false god or representation of a false god that can be worshiped. This may be extended to a false conception of God, or anything that takes the place of the true God. The false teachers had presented a different Jesus. A different conception of Jesus results in a different conception of God. If we reject Jesus as the Son of God, then we are rejecting the God of the Bible – the God whom the Bible claims is the only true God. Thus perhaps John’s point is this: Be careful not to be led astray by false conceptions of Jesus, and therefore God. In order to do this, keep your eyes upon the Jesus who is revealed by the Spirit in the Scriptures, and follow him.