

Ruled By Love
1 John 2:1-17
Victory Bible Fellowship
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Main Idea: When we demonstrate love for God and others, we prove that we are God's children.

Introduction

Despite being a Christian for many years every once in a while my own desires and feelings for people arise when I encounter them. I know that the Bible says I am supposed to love everyone but that can be very hard. Sometimes people don't want to live at peace with me. It can be very hard to love a terrorist, or a murderer or someone who hurts children.

Whatever the case may be, the Bible is clear that we are known as Christians by our love for one another and others. Many times we need God to help us love others despite the circumstances of our relationship with them. Jesus was able to love his enemies from the cross. He is our example in everything. We are becoming like him moment by moment.

Love is one of the themes of 1 John. John helps us to understand that we are to love God with everything in us and also love our brothers and sisters in Christ, God's family. But we must also be careful not to love the world system that is opposed to God. We are going to consider what it means to love God and love others without embracing the world system of sin surrounding us.

1 John 2:1-6

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. **2** He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. **3** And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. **4** Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, **5** but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: **6** whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

I. We demonstrate our love for God.

A We keep from sinning (1 John 2:1-2).

- 1** The first way we can show our love for God is to stop sinning and then keep from sinning in our daily walk with Jesus. Love is demonstrated through action instead of feeling.
- 2** For the first and only time in his first letter, John addresses his readers as "My little children." He had begun his letter by getting right into the matter of opposing those who said that Jesus did not have a physical body.

- 3 When he calls them his little children, the original word refers to children from toddler age to about 12. This does not mean that John is superior to his readers as a Christian. It would also not be taken as demeaning.
- 4 John is probably one of the oldest Christians alive and one of the last to have walked and talked with Jesus. Beyond this, he is an elder to the church, an apostle, and church leader. It is meant as a term of endearment.
- 5 John began in chapter 1 to outline the importance of living in the light, or in God's righteousness. He has talked about the high standard of living a life without sin. He showed Jesus providing for those who do sin.
- 6 But now he must point out that Jesus is not a cure-all for continual sin. John once again defines the high standard of not sinning in our walk with Christ.
- 7 After reminding them of this high standard John concedes the possibility that a Christian might sin. Then he says that we have an advocate with the father and defines that advocate as Jesus. He calls Jesus "The Righteous."
- 8 John sets up the condition so that it is uncommon for Christians to sin. But in the possible case that one does, he guarantees that Jesus is his advocate. The word "advocate" is used in John's Gospel for the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, the one who comes along side the believer.
- 9 In verse 2, John explains how Jesus advocates as one who comes alongside us. Another big theological word he uses is propitiation, the word for the sin sacrifice or atonement that covers and cleanses our sins.
- 10 But Jesus is a different sin sacrifice than the animals of the Old Testament. His blood not only covers sin but also eradicates the guilt that comes along with sin. It changes the situation so that the believer can refuse sin.
- 11 **Illustration:** One of my professors described it this way. Before we knew Jesus, sinning was in our nature. We were like a man tied up, unable to move. But when Jesus freed us from sin, the bonds were broken off and we can now choose to sin or the righteous.
- 12 His propitiation is so powerful that it not only covers and cleanses our own sins but those of the whole world. Jesus is Savior of the whole world because of his ability to forgive and cleanse all sins.
- 13 Now because of our ability to refuse sin, we are obligated to show our love for God by not sinning as our new lifestyle. If we stumble, Jesus is there for us.
- 14 **Application:** Jesus made a way for every person to have a vibrant and intimate relationship with God. Because of his sacrifice anyone who is obedient to his commands and teachings and accepts his sacrifice on their

behalf, putting their trust in him no longer has to sin. We are free from sin and any sin we commit is a choice we make rather than natural behavior.

B We keep his commandments (1 John 2:3-6).

- 1 The second way that we show God we love him is to keep his commandments. This refers specifically to the moral commandments that God has given us. It also refers to keeping Jesus' teachings.
- 2 John speaks of the idea of being in Christ or abiding in Christ in a couple of ways throughout this paragraph. He will use the verbs "to know" and "to abide." These refer to the ongoing relationship we have with God.
- 3 Another test of the intimacy and vibrance of our relationship with God is keeping his commandments. Later John will say that keeping Jesus' word is the same as keeping his commandments.
- 4 How can we know that we are God's children and living for him? John answers this question simply. If we truly know God we walk as Jesus walked in righteousness by following his commandments.
- 5 Jesus taught us first that loving him and abiding in him means following his commandments, keeping and obeying them (John 14:15, 21, 23; cf. 14:24; 15:10).
- 6 Love is defined differently in the Bible than in the world. The world primarily exhibits love out of personal feelings. But throughout the Old and New Testaments, love for God and others is demonstrated by action.
- 7 Verse 4 clarifies that anyone who professes a relationship with Jesus must demonstrate it by keeping his commandments. If the person is not obedient to Christ's teachings he is lying about his relationship with God.
- 8 The verbs in this paragraph are in the present active form. This is a form that define continual action. They are continuing to keep Jesus' commandments, and live out his commandments and lifestyle.
- 9 It is okay to stumble in our walk with Jesus. What is not okay is to continually sin and lead a lifestyle not in agreement with Jesus' teachings and commandments. This is what John is guarding against.
- 10 **Illustration:** When a running back continues to fumble the ball throughout a football game, he will end up on the bench. Before he causes irreparable damage, the coach will use another player. If a wide receiver continues to drop passes, the second stringer will get his shot. In our walk with Jesus, fumbling and stumbling should be uncommon experiences.
- 11 1 John 1 states two facts about sin. Anyone who claims they never sinned deceives themselves and they lack God's truth. Also, anyone who refuses to admit they've sinned makes God out to be a liar and lacks His word.

- 12 In 1 John 2:5 God's love is perfected in those who keep Jesus' word. There's a clear separation between unbelievers falsely testifying about knowing God and true believers whose deeds confirm their relationship.
- 13 A person must not only speak about his relationship with Jesus but actively demonstrate it. We can be assured of our relationship with Jesus when we not only speak about it but live a lifestyle that pleases Jesus.
- 14 To walk in our relationship with Jesus is to live in a way that honors and pleases him. Through obedience and keeping his commandments we enjoy his righteousness in us.
- 15 **Application:** Anyone can claim they know God. People must not only profess a relationship with Jesus but demonstrate it with action. Those who continuously live a righteous lifestyle show their relationship instead of just talking about it. They follow Jesus' commands and teachings. They willfully attempt to regularly demonstrate the attitude and mind of Christ.

1 John 2:7–14

7 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. 8 At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. 9 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. 11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. 14 I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

II. We demonstrate our love for others.

A Jesus commanded us to love one another.

- 1 The second time John addresses his readers he uses a different form of address, "Beloved." He will use this form of address 6 times in his first letter (1 John 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11).
- 2 Once again, just like the address "My little children," calling them his "Beloved" is also a term of endearment that would be used by John to show his close relationship to these believers.

- 3 We see him using the phrase, “I am writing to you” for the second time in our passage. He is giving his purpose for writing, reminding them why he wrote in the first place.
- 4 He tells the readers he is not writing a new commandment. This could refer to the truth already revealed that God wants us to stop sinning and that we show our love through obeying his commandments.
- 5 But this passage also refers to what he is about to teach concerning showing God love through loving others. The old commandment that John is referencing is “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
- 6 The Old Testament lays out this commandment in Leviticus 19:18 setting the ethical standard for Israel to love their neighbors. Unfortunately, the Israelites limited this commandment to fellow Israelites only.
- 7 Jesus highlighted the commandment from Leviticus to love your neighbor as yourself on several occasions during his ministry (Matthew 19:19; 22:39 and Mark 12:31 and Luke 10:27).
- 8 Jesus was not the only one to teach this commandment made new. Writers throughout the New Testament have also mentioned this commandment in agreement with his teaching (Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8).
- 9 Jesus renewed the commandment when he told his disciples to love one another and said that loving one another would be the hallmark that would confirm their genuine relationship with Jesus (John 13:34-35; 15:12-14).
- 10 This old commandment that was given in Leviticus about loving your neighbor as yourself is made new through Jesus who told his disciples to love one another.
- 11 **Application:** Loving God requires action rather than just words. Through obedience to Jesus’ commandments and teachings we demonstrate our love for God. The Holy Spirit helps us to obey God. When we love others we honor God’s image in his creation. Loving our neighbors and fellow believers follows Jesus’ teaching. It’s all about obedience to God and the actions that show we love him. Obedience is God’s love language.

B Love and hate compare to light and darkness.

- 1 One of John’s favorite motifs is that of light versus darkness. He mentions that disciples must love one another because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining (1 John 2:8).
- 2 Light and darkness correspond to righteousness and wickedness. John’s teaching on the darkness passing away is also taught by Paul (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 5:8). The “true light” refers to Jesus (John 1:9; 8:12), God as light (1 John 1:5) and our righteousness through Jesus.

- 3 John describes the difference between genuine relationship with Jesus and claiming relationship. One test for genuine fellowship is a love of fellow believers. Hatred of believers exposes false relationship with Jesus
- 4 John describes the one who loves fellow believers as being “in the light” or in a relationship with Jesus. However, the one who hates fellow believers is in darkness.
- 5 Verses 10-11 give another example of the lover and hater of God’s people. John explains that the one who loves fellow believers abides in the light, or is continually connected to Jesus.
- 6 He further describes this individual as one who has no cause to stumble into sin as he walks with Jesus. To not have conflict with other believers is to lessen the possibility of temptation to sin.
- 7 On the other hand, the one who hates believers is in darkness, or remains in wickedness, living in a sinful lifestyle, only knowing the darkness and stumbling around in it. He cannot see the truth around him.
- 8 **Application:** Your love or hate of fellow believers opens the door to temptation to sin and a sinful lifestyle. Hating fellow believers leaves you with animosity and a lack of peace. You would not respect believers or be open to their leading and counsel. Hating believers becomes a block in your relationship with Jesus. Part of loving Jesus is loving others.

C John encourages believers and leaders.

- 1 In what might be an aside from John’s subject matter, he steps back to explain his reasons for writing this epistle. John skipped the introduction in chapter 1 for effect, and starts over with the purpose for writing.
- 2 There are many slight differences in these three verses as John addresses his readers with the purpose for his writing. These subtle differences can be understood several different ways.
- 3 Some scholars believe John is writing to two groups. They interpret “Little children” as the entire congregation. The two groups are newer Christians (“Young men”) and seasoned Christians (“Fathers”).
- 4 Other scholars believe John is writing to three groups. “Children” (There are two words for children in Greek) are people age 0-20. “Young men” are ages 20-40. “Fathers” are elders in the congregation above 40.
- 5 John also changes the verb tense from “I am writing” to you to “I wrote” to you. Some scholars suggest he is referring to a previous epistle or his Gospel, or he is using an “epistlaory aorist” for style purposes.
- 6 Grammatically, John may be writing to each group either because of the reason given or he is describing their current status in the kingdom of God. He addresses each group twice.

- 7 Although each address is masculine, it refers to both genders. There are slight changes in what he says to each group between the first and second address.
- 8 Starting with the children, either by chronological or spiritual age, he tells them that their sins are forgiven for Jesus' name's sake and that they know the Father. This would be an experiential knowledge of God.
- 9 The forgiveness of sins has been a theme of the book so far. Chapter 1 explained that human beings sin and even believers stumble. Jesus has provided for sin through his blood, calling Jesus "faithful and just," "The Righteous" who is the propitiation (perfect sacrifice) for sins.
- 10 Next, he addresses fathers, either by chronological or spiritual age. He repeats in both addresses their experiential relationship with God. This is most likely a reference to God the Father, existing before creation.
- 11 Finally, he addresses young men, either by chronological or spiritual age. First he describes their victory over the evil one, Satan, the devil. Their victory is through the merits of Jesus Christ who defeated him long ago.
- 12 In the second address, he clarifies their victory over the evil one. It is because they are strong and God's Word abides in them which, reminds us of verses 5-6 where both "his word" and "abiding in him" are mentioned.
- 13 The word for "strong" is used many times throughout the Old Testament to describe power, and especially the Lord as the Mighty One. It shows that the young men have the power of God on their side.
- 14 Along with strength the young men also have God's Word abiding in them. One of the ways to defeat the devil is to use the Scriptures against him. God's powerful word and voice outmatch anything in the universe.
- 15 **Application:** We have all the tools we need to be victorious in Christ. He has forgiven our sins so we can know him. We have an abiding relationship with him. He gives us strength and his powerful Word. He has gone before us and won the battle so that we can be overcomers! He has given us all we need but we must use it for his glory!

1 John 2:12–13	1 John 2:13–14
12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.	I write to you, children, because you know the Father.
12 Γράφω ὑμῖν, τέκνια, ὅτι ἀφέωνται ὑμῖν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.	14 ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, παιδιά, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα.
13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning	14 I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

13 γράφω ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς.	ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς.
I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.	I write to to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.
γράφω , ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν.	ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι ἰσχυροί ἐστε καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει καὶ νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν.

1 John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

III. We demonstrate our hatred of the world.

A We do not love the world.

- 1 John has been expressing the ways we show our love of God and our love of others, especially other believers, and he now turns to showing our love for God by rejecting the world.
- 2 It seems harsh for John to tell us to not love the world. Is this not the same John who wrote in John 3:16 that God loved the world? How are we to understand such a negative command?
- 3 We are helped a great deal in understanding this command when we survey the ways that John uses “world” throughout his writings. John uses the word for world in at least three different ways.
 - a The first way is to refer to creation itself (John 1:9-10; 8:25; 9:5; 10:36; 11:27).
 - b The second way the word “world” is used by John is to refer to people living in the world (John 1:10; 3:16–17; 4:42; 6:51; 7:4; 8:12, 26; 9:5; 12:19, 47).
 - c The third way John references the world is the evil system and everything that stands opposed to God and his agenda (John 1:10; 3:17; 8:23; 9:39; 12:31; 14:17, 19, 22; 15:18–19).
- 4 John is using the word “world” negatively to refer to the world system and all that opposes God. If we are friends of the world we are enemies of God.

- 5 John proposes that anyone loving the world lacks the love of the father. This conditional sentence suggests it's possible for Christians to love the world, but if they do it is most certain that person lacks God's love.
- 6 John addresses the desire in us to compromise with the world system. As outsiders we desire to become insiders no matter what the cost. It is impossible to compromise with the world and still remain a Christian.
- 7 There is a common Christian phrase that comes out of the ideas that John espouses in his Gospel. The phrase is, "In the world but not of the world." While we live in the world we are not part of the world system.
- 8 **Illustration:** The world we live in is our workplace as Christians. God has strategically placed us here to influence it for Christ. The world is not our home. We do not operate like the world does. We have different values, a different mindset and master, and a different destiny.
- 9 "Quite simply, loving the world does not mean accepting it as it is, but remaking it into what it was created by God to be: people living in the realm of life and light."¹
- 10 **Application:** We must not become part of the world system. It is so easy to become influenced by the world rather than to be the influencers. God has called us to make an impact in this world. We can't do that if we are no different than those around us. God wants us to demonstrate his love and power in this world. Let the world be drawn to Christ because of us rather than in spite of us.

B We do not love the things in the world.

- 1 After telling us that a person who loves the world does not have the love of the father in him, John clarifies that the world contains three elements that are not from the father. To him, this is the epitome of worldliness.
- 2 One possible connection to the list of these elements is Genesis 3:6. Eve sees that the fruit is pleasing to the eyes. Then she tastes it and it is good for food. Finally, she sees that it is useful for becoming wise.
- 3 Another possible connection is Jesus enduring all three elements when the devil tempted him in the wilderness. We will compare Christ's temptations with each element that is presented to us in the world.
- 4 One caution must be given before we talk about the things in the world. We must remember that God created this world for our benefit and pleasure.

¹ Marianne Meye Thompson, [*1-3 John*](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

- 5 Everything we desire can be obtained in a godly way. These three elements demonstrate evil desires that don't put God first. We seek them with our own abilities and resources, ignoring God's intent for us.
- 6 The first of these three elements is the lust of the flesh. This is the desire to feed our flesh rather than our souls. It is to seek what our body desires in ungodly ways.
- 7 These are the impulses and cravings of our physical nature that demand to be fulfilled no matter what the cost. It is almost like an addiction. There is no self-control when it comes to fulfilling these desires.
- 8 **Illustration:** In Matthew 4:2-3 the devil tempts Jesus to turn stones into bread. Because he has fasted 40 days and nights he is very hungry. His body desires food but he refuses to give in.
- 9 The second element is the lust of the eyes. This is when we seek whatever our eyes desire, whatever we see that we want. We are willing to get it no matter what the cost.
- 10 We would not even be aware that we wanted it if it wasn't for our eyes coveting it. Now that we've seen it we have decided we can't live without it. Instead of seeing with God's eyes we see with our own eyes.
- 11 **Illustration:** In Matthew 4:8-9 the devil tempts Jesus by showing him all the earth's kingdoms. If Jesus would bow down to him, the devil would give him all of these kingdoms as a reward. Jesus does not give in to the temptation of all that he sees because only God deserves our worship.
- 12 The third element is the pride of life. The pride of life pertains to boasting about our possessions and abilities. It is self-reliance or believing that we can fulfill all of our needs with our own resources.
- 13 It is the illusion that we are all that and a bag of chips. We become our own god and our decisions are final. We think we know everything and we don't need anyone. It is pure, naked arrogance.
- 14 **Illustration:** In Matthew 4:5-6 the devil tempts Jesus by taking him on a high mountain and challenging him to throw himself down. God has promised that he would not allow Jesus to be hurt physically. Despite this promise Jesus doesn't do it because it would be testing the Lord.
- 15 In verse 17, John contrasts the worldly one with the one focused on God. The world has its own values while the obedient one does God's will. Also, the world is passing away while the obedient one remains forever.
- 16 When John says that the world is passing away, he is not even referencing the end of the world. He is referencing the fact that the world system is decaying and its desires only bring emptiness.

- 17 The words “passing away” from 1 John 2:8 concern the darkness because the true light has come. The true light refers to Jesus and to his truth that is in us. Its moral values are antithetical to the Eternal One.
- 18 The one who remains forever because he does not love the world is fixed on a better inheritance and promise than the world. What he does lasts for eternity because he does God’s will.
- 19 **Application:** We live in a very materialistic society. It is very hard to not become envious of others and covet their stuff. But we are called to keep God first. We can only serve one master. We must choose whether that is God or the world. We cannot have it both ways. We can be grateful for God’s material blessings. We must give him the glory for all that we have rather than thinking we have gained it all on our own.

Conclusion

John calls us to a deeper walk with him, into discipleship with him. To show God that we love him, we must love his people and demonstrate that love through obedience. Beyond this, we must maintain our allegiance to God and not compromise with the world. Our love for God is not based on emotions that change in an instant based on our situation. It is based on action, commitment and obedience.

Altar Call for Unbelievers: Maybe you’re living for yourself, trusting in your own resources. You don’t think you need anyone. You live by your own rules and do what you want. But this isn’t really working out for you. You are finding all your stuff has little meaning and is empty. Although you will still experience troubles in your life, accepting Jesus will mean that he walks with you through those troubles. Life will be full because beyond this life is eternity with God. (Pray for any who raise their hands.)

Altar Call for Believers: The world can cause distractions for believers. We must press forward and focus on God, keeping him as the center of our attention. We must not turn to the left or to the right. We must not get distracted by the things in this world. Every day we must wake up and recommit to keeping our focus on Jesus. Let’s take some time this morning and focus on Jesus at the altar.