

# **LifeWay Family Bible Series for May 2: We know him if we obey his command to love 41904**

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## **We know him if we obey his command to love**

Proverbs 3:5-6; 1 John 2:1-11

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How do we know anything? Some things we know simply as facts. We have studied them and committed them to memory. Much of our formal education involved this kind of learning and knowing.

Other things we know experientially. That is, we learned these things through life experiences. My grandfather would call this the “school of hard knocks.” Learning is an equal-opportunity employer. There are no age restrictions on learning. Old dogs can learn new tricks, and new dogs need to learn the things old dogs have known for ages. The best learning involves an integration of the facts of life and the experiences of life.

John spent a lifetime getting the facts of the gospel to the people. His own purpose statement for writing his gospel said: “Jesus did many other

miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31).



Knowing the facts was to lead to belief in the Savior. He wrote Revelation so we might know about his presence with us and his purpose for us even in times of suffering. Knowing the facts was to lead to faithful living in tough times.

In John's epistles, he turns to the question of how we can know what we believe and how we can put ourselves to the test. How do we know we are the children of God? Let's look at the tests John prescribes in 1 John 2:1-11. How can we know we know him?

"We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands" (1 John 2:3). Two stories from Scripture illustrate this better than a thousand words of exposition.

Saul went to war against the Amalekites. He was told by God he would receive no spoils of war because all was to be destroyed. Saul decided to spare "everything that was good." Samuel went out to meet Saul upon his return from battle. Saul tried to tell the prophet he spared the good things in order to sacrifice them to God. Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).

In a parable with a similar point, Jesus told of a man with two sons. He instructed each of them to go into the vineyard and work for a day. One said he would not go, but later went and worked. The second said he would

go but never did. Jesus asked, “Which of the two did what the Father wanted?” (Matthew 21:31). The answer was the one who obeyed. A good test of our faith is found in what we do, not simply in what we know.

“This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (1 John 2:5-6). The danger in the “obedience test” is one of legalism. The Pharisees prided themselves on their obedience, but most of them did not follow Jesus. When people noticed the courage of Peter and John, they did not comment on their dedicated obedience to the law. “They took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). To follow Jesus means more than to simply obey the law.

Do you witness to people because you are commanded to or because you have come to love people and their need for a Savior? Jesus saw the crowds of people and had compassion on them, not because God commanded him to, but because they were needy (Matthew 9:36).

It bothers me to hear people say, “I love you in the Lord.” Does that mean they only like me out of obedience to God? I don't think Jesus told us to love people out of obedience alone. I think he actually expected us to love them. Following Jesus puts obedience in the context of a relationship. We obey because we are loved. We obey because we love Jesus. We obey because our relationship with him leads us to a willing compliance with personal trust rather than simply an outward observance based on laws and codes.

“Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble” (1 John 2:10). Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35).

It seems pretty clear. How does the world know we love Jesus? How can we know we love Jesus? It will be known to all by how we love one another. Put

your faith to the test.

### **Questions for discussion**

- One of the ways John sought to spread the gospel was through his writings—what means are you using to share the good news of Jesus Christ?
- What assures you that you have a living, vital relationship with Jesus Christ?
- How do you keep from doing things out of a feeling of obligation, but instead as a natural progression of your relationship with Christ?
- Can you serve Christ while filled with animosity?

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