

Love in Action

1 John 2: Abiding in Love

Lesson 2

1 John 2:1–29

In a nutshell ~

The opening verses of 1 John 2 are the conclusion to John's statements in chapter 1 about fellowship with God and one another. Previously, we learned that it is through Jesus Christ that we have salvation and fellowship with God. We're also learning that walking in the light with Him enables us not to sin; when we do sin, we have an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous—who intercedes on our behalf. Maintaining a right heart before Him qualifies us for true fellowship with the brethren.

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

Read 1 John 2:1–29.

After focusing much of his attention on refuting the false teachers, John now turns to warmly address the Christians. At the time of this writing, John was nearing one hundred years of age. This elder father of the faith had spent nearly all his life in ministry, becoming revered by all those he considered his spiritual children.

His transition to addressing the believers begins in verse one with the words, "*My little children*," meaning *my born ones*. It was a term of loving affection used by a teacher to address his disciples.

Up close ~

There are 7 instances in the Book of 1 John where he uses the words "*My little children*." In several instances, John uses these words to convey his love as he prefaces a hard word to the believers. Look up each reference containing the words "*my little children*" in John's epistle and note the important message he wanted to convey to the church.

a. 2:1

b. 2:12

c. 2:28

d. 3:7

e. 3:18

f. 4:4

g. 5:21

We're discovering that the beginning point of fellowship with God and other Christians is the understanding that we need to walk in the light rather than in the darkness. As God's children, when we choose to sin and we confess it, God is willing to forgive. We *need not* sin but, when we do, we have an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ His Son.

1. What qualifies Jesus to be our Advocate? v. 2

John is attempting to correct the perception in the minds of his readers who claim to know God but make no effort to obey Him. "*Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation*" (Hebrews 9:28).

2. How can a person be certain whether or not they're a believer? v. 3

a. What about the person who professes to know Christ but doesn't obey Him—is it possible for that one to belong to the family of God? v. 4

It is only by taking God's commands seriously and keeping them that we can have absolute assurance we know and belong to Him.

3. What is the litmus test of a person's obedience to God? v. 5

The word *perfected* (v. 5) does not refer to a state of perfection as we understand it, but is better translated as *made complete* or *become mature*. In verse 6, John states that the person who says he abides in Christ ought also to walk *as He walked*. In other words, if we're going to wear the title "Christian," we must do more than just *talk the talk*; we must also be willing to *walk the walk*.

Selah ~

What has John taught us so far? As a recap, go back and examine the 5 “If we” statements in your reading of 1 John. Summarize John’s point in each one below.

- a. “If we say. . .” (1:6, 8,10)
- b. “If we walk. . .” (1:7)
- c. “If we sin. . .” (2:1)
- d. “If we confess. . .” (1:9)
- e. “If we keep. . .” (2:3–5)
- f. Personal: Your life’s behavior tells the world what *you* believe. Think about it . . . are you more at ease to *talk the talk* or do you welcome the challenge to *walk the walk*? Please explain.
- g. What in your study this week has convinced you that you do indeed belong to God?

Key Verse ~ (Memory verse) **1 John 2:5**

“But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.”

Review this verse often throughout the week. Write it out a couple of times in the space provided to help you commit it to memory. By week’s end, try to notice *how* and *where* you are able to put it into practice. Note your results.

The Test of Knowing Him

Read 1 John 2:7–29 for review.

John had just finished telling his readers that they should walk as Jesus walked—by obeying God. John will now reveal a second way to discern a true believer—whether or not they love as Jesus loved. John states clearly that those who claim to walk in the light while hating their believing brother or sister are really walking in the darkness. The key to walking in the light is: LOVE! Unless believers learn to love one another, they will not be able to grow spiritually.

For the Jews, the command to love others is an old one, dating all the way back to God's covenant with the nation of Israel, when He set them apart as His chosen people. The new commandment was given by Jesus so that the world would be able to tell His people apart from others.

1. How was the old commandment stated in Leviticus 19:18b?
 - a. Restate the way Jesus issued the new commandment in John 13:34–35. Those who followed His command were considered what?

John knew he wasn't writing a new commandment (v.7), as the command to love one another was the same message that was heard all the way back to the Old Testament. What made it new was that Jesus interpreted it in a new way. Those who believed in Jesus had *their hearts changed* by His love. He became the motivating factor for Christians to love one another. The Indwelling Holy Spirit makes it a reality!

2. In whom is the truth of this command made visible? v. 8
 - a. Personal: Are you able to see yourself loving others the way Christ loves you?

In the remainder of the chapter, John continues to highlight the contrasts of light and darkness, love and hate, God and the world.

3. What does John say about the person who claims to be in the light, while at the same time hating their brother or sister? v. 9
 - a. In contrast to verse 9, what act reveals true faith? What benefit results? v. 10

- b. What does John say keeps a person from loving others? v. 11

Selah ~

Think for a moment about what it is like to turn off the light switch and walk around in a dark room. What does it do to your overall perspective and sense of direction? Are you more prone to trip and fall or perhaps cause someone else to? Now take it a step further and apply this same lesson spiritually. What would happen to your spiritual perspective and sense of direction if you were to deliberately cut yourself off from the light of truth? What affect would the darkness potentially have over you? Please explain your thoughts.

John was most likely referring here to the false teachers and their followers who were rejecting the Christians leaving their assembly. But what happens if you find yourself seriously disliking another believer who fellowships in the same church as you every Sunday? Does it mean that you are not a true believer after all? No! John's words are not referring to disliking a Christian brother or sister in the faith who may be disagreeable. There will always be a few people in the church who are not to our liking. Rather, he is referring to those who respond to the unlikable and disagreeable by ignoring or ostracizing them—perhaps even turning their backs on them as if they were enemies—that isn't how God's loves works. God's love working in and through us is not something *we feel emotionally* but a *choice we make deliberately to love as Jesus loved*. If our heart is right with Him, He enables us to love the unlovable. After all, each one of us was at one time or another in that same category with Him!

Verses 12–14 are difficult to understand. In them John addresses three different groups of readers: little children, fathers, and young men. There is disagreement as to whether these divisions represent chronological age or degrees of spiritual maturity. Some Bible scholars believe that the three terms refer to all the readers, and that whatever is attributed to each category is intended for all—since they had all experienced salvation, spiritual warfare, and close fellowship with God. Based on John's previous use of the term *little children*, it is most likely that he was referring to everyone in the church. The distinction, then, would be to use the three terms for emphasis.

4. Finish the statements below as to why John wrote to each group (vv.12–14). Take it a step further and consider the questions that follow each statement to better help you understand what John is saying to each one.

He wrote to little children because . . .

- What basic fact would *little children* comprehend about their faith?

He wrote to fathers because . . .

- What greater wisdom would *fathers* possess because they had a mature relationship with God?

He wrote to young men because . . .

- What quality would *young men* possess that would enable them to be victorious over their enemy?
- Verse 14 reveals the *key* to remaining strong and living victoriously—what is it?

John is attempting to reassure Christians of their salvation and growth in Christ. Next he will warn them about the dangers of loving the world and listening to false teaching. He tells them that not only are believers to love God and fellow believers, he also tells them what they are not to love—the world. John is not referring here to God's creation—that which reveals His glory and which He declared as good. He is also not referring to the fact that God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die for it (John 3:16). The term for *world* John uses here actually refers to the realm of Satan's influence—those who are under his authority and who hate God as a result.

5. Is it possible to love the world and love God at the same time? v.15 (See James 4:4 for further insight into why this is so.)

- a. Verse 16 is a summation of all sin that is present in the world. Name the three categories into which every sin known to mankind falls.

Once again, John makes a sharp contrast: God and the world are such opposites that it is impossible to love both at the same time—they are mutually exclusive. But since believers cannot remove themselves from the world, we must understand that we live in the middle of a war zone. There will always be an ongoing battle on earth between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. One day Satan's kingdom will be destroyed and his rule will come to an end. In the meantime, our mission as believers is to learn to be *in the world but not of the world!*

- b. What is happening to this present world? v. 17 What about the one who does the will of God? What does John mean by this?

The world's values, which seem so appealing, are in direct opposition to God. As believers, when we love the world, we are turning away from God's love to a *substitute*, and the world is full of substitutes! Anything in our lives that keeps us from enjoying God's love and doing His will is of the world and not of God. It is foolish to hold tightly to something that is passing away. God's missionary Jim Elliot once said: "*He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.*" Remember that isolation from God's people (even the difficult ones) makes it very easy for believers to become worldly. We need each other—we belong to each other—we depend on each other to live in this world and to enjoy the next!

In the remaining verses of chapter 2, John warns about the coming of the Antichrist, and that many antichrists are already here; meaning the last hour before the Lord's return has already begun.

6. What is the evidence that proves this? v. 19

a. What does John have to say about the spirit of antichrist? vv. 22–23

7. John states in verses 20–21 that every believer has an anointing from the Holy Spirit. What does this anointing ensure?

a. Every believer can be confident of this anointing—why? v. 27 What is the promise here for *you*?

John writes (v. 26) to warn all believers about those who will try to deceive them. But what are the promises for the believers who continue to *abide in Him*?

b. vv. 24–25

8. What last piece of advice does John give in this chapter to encourage his readers? vv. 28–29 What does this mean to you personally?

Selah ~

Abiding—remaining in Him—results in eternal life and the assurance now that *you* may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming! Doing the right thing does not *make* you a Christian—it only proves that you are one!

Notes