

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc. www.dtmwebsite.org Today's Date: July 27, 2025

We Ought To Look Like Jesus

by Dan Trygg

“By this we know that we have come to experientially-know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected (brought-to-completion, matured). By this we know that we are in Him: ⁶ the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”
1 John 2:3-6

Remember, John is proclaiming to us “the word (or, message) of the Life”, ...the “age-type life” that was with the Father, and became manifest in Jesus of Nazareth. John and the other apostles had experienced the Life expressed through Him, and their encounters with Him had radically impacted them. This “age-type life” which they had experienced was what John proclaimed. That is what this letter is about, the proclamation and experience of the life-of-the-age-to-come-in-the-here-and-now. John proclaimed it so that we ourselves might have a participation or sharing of this Life in ourselves. This sharing-of-Life is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ, ...and it is this Life that we who know Jesus can share together, as the basis of our oneness in Him. Much of this letter is about John trying to help us identify when we are walking in the Life, and when we are not.

The first indicator of this Life is that it should produce “Light”, ...the righteousness of God's own character..., in our lives. If we say that we are having a “sharing” with God, it will be made evident in the fruit of our life. If we say that we are having a “sharing” with God, and are walking in the darkness (practicing evil or sin), we are being deceived, and are not doing the truth. We all have sin within our members, and we have all sinned in the past. Also, it is possible for Christians to continue to fall into sin. If we acknowledge that, and confess it, Jesus provided our atoning sacrifice, and will be our Advocate with the Father. The Father will be dependable to send away our sin, and cleanse us from every unrighteousness. But, here is the identifying mark of the “age-type life”, ...John is writing these things to us in order that we would not sin. It is possible not to sin, ...not because of our own power or self-discipline, but because of the shared-Life which we have in Christ. That “age-type life” is incompatible with sin. Therefore, if we stumble into sin, we are not walking in the Life, ...but the Life can enable us to walk in freedom from sin.

It is important to say here that “the goal” is not to be walking a sinless life. That is the wrong focus. People have focused on that, and have fallen into legalism and frustration, ...or, they have fallen into self-deception, claiming to be “free from willful sin” while still obviously walking “in the darkness” in some way or another. There have been movements in Christian history that made this their focus, ...and it only caused division, or invited charges of hypocrisy. Again, John is being very practical here. He is trying to help us to recognize when we are walking in the Life, and when we are not. The goal is to focus on the Life. The freedom from sin comes from abiding in the Life, ...as a fruit.

This first indicator of “walking in the Life” is about freedom from what is negative, ...sin, unrighteousness, and error. The Life of God will never lead us into sin, unrighteousness, or error. The next indicator that John shares with us directs us to watch for something positive. John says, “By this we experientially-know...”. This is a phrase that John uses repeatedly. [In fact, he uses the phrase “by this” ten times. Eight of those times, it is followed by “...we experientially-know...” (2:3,5; 3:16,19,24; 4:2,13; 5:2) and on two other occasions, it is followed by “...it is evident/manifest...” (3:10; 4:9), which is really just another way of saying the same thing! And, when you write them down on paper, you can see that they are evenly spaced out. Two times “know” followed by “manifest”, ...four more times “know” in the middle section, ...followed by another “manifest”, ...and then two more “know”. This is a glimpse into the intentional, symmetrical, poetic structure of John's craftsmanship in his writing.] What will we experientially-know? “...that we have-experientially-known Him.” In other words, we will know that our faith is authentic, ...that we have had a life-changing encounter with God that has radically changed us and still affects us to this day. In Greek, this is a “perfect tense” of the verb, which means that the action happened in the past with ongoing effect. We genuinely met God, and it still affects us. We are no longer the same as we had been. Just as John had begun this letter, describing his experiences of Jesus, ...things that he saw that still affected him, and things he heard that had forever changed him..., in the same way, he expects that anyone who truly came to know Jesus, and had received the “age-type life” that is the shared-Life of God's Spirit, would have indicators of that Life at work in his or her life now. A true and life-changing encounter with God, leaves a mark, ...evidence of the Life.

How can we know that we have-experientially-known Him? What is this first positive indicator that John tells us to be watching for? It is clearly stated for us, “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if ever we might be keeping His commandments.” Keeping God's commandments can be an indicator that we truly do have a relationship with Him. Of course, it is possible to put on a good appearance of obeying the commandments of God in

our own strength. The Pharisees were famous for being zealous for keeping the Law. However, when you looked closer, it became evident that their obedience was often only external. They put on a good show of outward righteousness, in certain behaviors, yet *they lacked compassion, mercy and even justice* (Matt. 23:23). Jesus said that they were like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside appeared beautiful, but were filled with corruption on the inside. But, why does John mention this as a sign to be watching for? **John is being practical and personal. What is an indicator of someone who has truly come to know God in a way that continues to affect him or her? John says that *such a person will find a new desire and capacity to live in ways that are in keeping with God's commandments.***

If the **negative indicator** is that we may not sin, ...that we would find the ability to no longer do those things that are selfish, inappropriate and wrong..., one **positive indicator** is that we would find the ability and desire to do the things that are right and good. You see, these are not necessarily the same things. ***Not doing what is wrong, does not mean that you are doing what is right.*** Doing what is wrong is a ***sin of commission***, but not doing what is right can be a ***sin of omission***. In fact, Jesus' brother, James, wrote "to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin" (4:17). But **John is saying that the person who has truly come to know God will have a change of life. They will find a new ability to stop sinning, and they will also begin to obey the commandments of God.**

This is a critical sign. John goes on to say, "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him', and, at the same time is **not keeping His commandments** is a liar (false, fake, deceived), and the truth is not in him." John's language is very simple, yet his statements have a way of "painting someone into a corner". **Again, John's purpose is to help us discern when we are walking in the Life from God, versus when we are not.** In 5:13, he wrote to those who have believed in Jesus, in order that they may know (observe) that they have eternal ('age-type') life. **He wants us to be able to look at our lives to see the signs that indicate that we really do have this Life, so that we would not be led astray, ...and so that we would know what we should be expecting this life of the kingdom of God to produce in us.** He does not want us to settle for something that is mediocre or immature. **He wants to incite us to press toward growth and maturity.**

Note the focus of the next statement: "... but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected." Obedience comes as a result of the *agapē*-love of God working within the believer. The word for "perfected" means "to-be-brought-to-the-end-point, to-be-matured". Similar to Paul's description of the character qualities that are the "fruit of the Spirit" in a believer's life, John seems to indicate that **obedience comes through a growing development and maturation of the *agapē*-love of God in the life of the Christian.** This is another expression for the Life that John introduced in the beginning of chapter one. **The Life is not only the "life of the age-to-come", it is the inworking presence of the *agapē*-love of God.** The apostle Paul said that "the *agapē*-love of God has-been-poured-out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:5). The liberation from acting out in sin, and the expanding development of obedience in our lives, is a result of the maturation of Divine love working within us. It is the inworking of *His* Life, but we also can invest in, cooperate with, ignore, or hinder the growth of that inner Life-of-Love. **When Love is fully-matured, we will have freedom, ...freedom from sin, freedom for obedience.**

John gives us another indicator: "***By this we know that we are in Him, ...the one saying (claiming) to abide in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as (lit, 'according as') He (Jesus) walked.***" Again, John is not going to let us slide into self-deception. He gives us another "measuring stick" of what the Life from God should look like. But, before we go there, we should note that **John gives us two new ways of thinking about what our Life in Christ should focus on. First, he introduces the idea of our being "in Him".** He uses this phrase to refer to our relationship to God some seven times in this letter (2:5,6,28; 3:6,24; 4:13,15). **The second word picture John introduces here is the word "abide".** "Abide" occurs 21 times in this letter. It means to "live in, dwell in, continue in, stay in, or remain". **John puts these two word pictures together. We are to "abide ...in Him".** This is a way of saying that **it is possible to continually get our life, leading, direction and empowerment from our relationship with Him.** He is to be the Source of our lives. We are to continually look to Him, and express what comes from His initiative. This is the word picture that John had developed in his gospel, using the imagery of Jesus as the True Vine (15:1-8). We are like branches that receive their life, vitality and fruitbearing capacity from Him. **Apart from Him, we wither and can produce nothing that looks like Him. If we remain in Him, however, His life in and through ours will produce the fruit that comes from Him.** This brings us back to the indicator that John introduced in this paragraph. ***The Life that comes from God ought to look like Jesus.*** If someone *says* that he or she is abiding in Jesus, then *their walk* ought to look like *His walk*. ***By this we will know that we are "in Him".*** If we are *not* seeing the fruit of a life that looks like Jesus, we need to go back to the Source. If we are "in Him", then the Life that comes from Him has been placed in us, through the indwelling Holy Spirit. As we learn to "abide in Him", the fruit of His presence in us will come to be expressed through us. **The word for "ought" is a strong word. The walk of someone who is abiding in God must, or is bound to be like Jesus' walk.** God's nature *will* produce God's fruit, as surely as it did in Jesus. **There is no room for excuses, here. No room to lower the standard. Instead, the challenge is to "press in". We aim higher by going deeper.**