

Lesson 2 | March 10, 2024

Live as a Disciple of Christ

Study Text: 1 John 2:3–29; 3 John 1–15 (NLT*)

* *The KJV combines verses 14–15 into verse 14.*

Central Truth: Christian discipleship means living in obedience to Christ.

Key Verse: 1 John 2:6

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (KJV).

Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did (NLT).

Learning Objectives:

- Students will understand that obedience to God’s commands reveals our love for and knowledge of Him.
- Students will choose to obey the command of Jesus to love others the way He loves us.
- Students will recognize the need to guard their hearts and minds against false teachers by knowing God and His Word.

Introducing the Study

Say: Today’s lesson is from 1 John 2 and the Book of 3 John. The apostle writes, “Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6, NLT). True disciples will follow Jesus’ example in the way they interact with others, use their time and resources, respond to temptation, and engage with the world around them.

Opening Activity—The Highest Form of Flattery

Ask: Who is someone you admired when you were a child? In what ways does your life reflect their influence? Examples may include playing a certain sport because you admired an athlete or listening to country music because you admired a musician you saw on television.

Say: Imitating people we admire is one way of honoring them. We reveal our respect for them by wanting to be like them or taking an interest in things that are important to them. On a much deeper level, we reveal our love for and knowledge of God by obeying the things Jesus taught us. (Share your highlights from the following text.) √ **Play the “What Is a Disciple?” video—available at [RadiantLifeCurriculum.com/Adult](https://www.RadiantLifeCurriculum.com/Adult).**

First John 2 and the Book of 3 John encourage us to live as Jesus lived. The apostle John challenged us to reveal our knowledge of God by living in obedience to His commands. He helped us to understand one of the main ways we reveal our love for God is by loving one another and guarding against a love for the things of this world. John also helped us to recognize false teachers by observing how they live, and he encouraged us to remain in the truth of Christ’s teaching.

Part 1—Obey God’s Commands

Obedience Reveals Knowledge of God

1 John 2:3–6

Say: How can we be certain that we know and love God? This passage tells us clearly. “We can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. . . . those who obey God’s Word truly show how completely they love him” (1 John 2:3,5, NLT). Instead of judging how well others are obeying God when you hear these verses, ask yourself: Do my thoughts, words, and responses reveal my knowledge and love for God? This isn’t an easy question to grapple with, but it’s important to allow God’s Word to guide us into living like Jesus in ever-increasing ways. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

People may claim to be Christians simply because they attend church or their family is traditionally Christian. However, true Christianity is not simply a matter of connecting with a church or proclaiming belief in God. It is demonstrated by a life of obedience to the Word of God. This passage in 1 John 2 couldn’t be more clear: We prove our knowledge of God and our love for Him by obeying His commandments. The more Christ’s disciples come to know Him and the Father through the pages of the Bible, the more they understand God’s great love for them.

Reading God’s Word also helps individuals see His power and sovereignty. This growing knowledge of God’s love and character helps His followers trust Him more and more. Obedience is a natural response for someone who truly knows God. Conversely, disobedience reveals unbelief and a disregard for God and the truth of His Word.

Those of us who claim to be Christ’s disciples should prioritize getting to know Him more every day. As we spend time in His Word, the Holy Spirit will help us grow more aware of who He is and just how much He loves us. Because of Christ’s unfailing love, we can trust His commands are always for our good. When we personally experience the depth of Christ’s love, we can easily love and obey Him in return.

Discuss

- ? Why is it important to read these passages and allow the Holy Spirit to shine a light on our own lives rather than using these verses to judge those around us?
- ? How does an increasing knowledge of God help us grow more obedient to His commands?
- ? How is our love for God demonstrated when we live as Jesus did (1 John 2:6)?

Love One Another

1 John 2:7–11; 3 John 1–8

Say: One of the main ways we reveal our knowledge and love for God is by loving each other. In one of Jesus’ last conversations with His disciples, He said, “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my

commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. . . . This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you” (John 15:9–10,12, NLT). Then in verse 17, He repeated, “This is my command: Love each other” (NLT). When we do, we remain in His love. Our love for one another reveals our love for God. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In 1 John 2, the apostle John again contrasted light and darkness. Those who are living in the light will love one another. Those who do not love their fellow believers are walking in the darkness, and this darkness will blind them to the truth. As John wrote, “Jesus lived the truth of this commandment” (1 John 2:8, NLT). If we are unclear about what love looks like, we simply have to look at the earthly life of Jesus. His love was never self-absorbed or based on feelings. He always chose to do what was best for others. When we love others the way Jesus loves us, we will walk in the light of truth and love.

The “one another” passages of the New Testament provide practical insights on what it looks like for us to love like Jesus. These verses challenge us to forgive, offer hospitality, encourage, serve, be kind, and honor others. We should allow the “one another” commands to guide the way we interact with those in our lives, especially the way we treat those who are closest to us. Jesus told us people would know we belong to Him by our love for one another.

Resource Packet Item 1: Obeying the “One Another” Passages

Distribute the worksheet and encourage students to prayerfully read the passages, evaluating their own obedience level. Then ask them to allow the Holy Spirit to lead them to healthier relationships as they confess and ask for His help.

In 3 John 1–8, the apostle commended Gaius as one who lived according to the truth. And Gaius demonstrated his love for God by caring for the traveling teachers who came through his area. Gaius lived the “one another” passages in a tangible way and is an example for us today.

Discuss

? How is the way we interact with our family, friends, and coworkers a reflection of our love for God?

? The apostle John tells us, “Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the light. . . . Anyone who hates a fellow believer is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness” (1 John 2:10–11, NLT). How would you describe love as light and hatred as darkness?

Part 2—Know and Love the Father You Who Belong to Him

1 John 2:12–14

Say: John was writing this letter to Christians of all ages and stages in their faith journey. He addressed them affectionately as “God’s children”—both those who are

“mature in the faith,” and those who are “young in the faith” (1 John 2:12–13, NLT). These verses imply there is a progression as we grow in our knowledge and love for God. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Looking closely at 1 John 2:12–14, we can see several attributes of true believers:

- Their sins are forgiven because of Jesus’ atoning work on the cross.
- They know the Father and the Son.
- They experience victory over the evil one.
- God’s power helps them live strong, obedient lives, free from the entanglement of sin.
- They are hiding God’s Word in their hearts.

As disciples of Jesus, our growth is always impacted by our knowledge and application of God’s Word. Hebrews 4:12 reveals the power of the Scripture: “The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (KJV). His Word helps us see ourselves and our motives clearly. It consistently guides into all that is right and good.

Discuss

? What is the correlation between spiritual strength and God’s Word abiding in our hearts?

? What are some characteristics of believers who are mature in the faith?

Do Not Love the World

1 John 2:15–17

Say: The apostle John said clearly that the love of the Father is not in us when we love the world. He wasn’t referring to the physical earth, but to worldliness—the “lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16, KJV). *Lust* can be defined simply as the desire for something we don’t have. The “lust of the flesh” refers specifically to sexual sin. The “lust of the eyes” is a covetous desire for material possessions. And the “pride of life” is arrogance in our positions and accomplishments. We cannot pursue these things and truly grow in our knowledge and love for God. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Pursuing sexual satisfaction, material wealth, and elevated status will never satisfy our souls. These pursuits are fleeting and empty. Instead, God says,

Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live.” (Isaiah 55:1–3, KJV)

Pursuing God through faith in Jesus and listening diligently to His Word will satisfy the deepest part of us. All other pursuits will pass away.

Discuss

- ? How can we guard our hearts from worldly pursuits?
- ? How can we nurture the pursuit of God and His truth?

Resource Packet Item 2: God's Invitation

Provide this worksheet as a study guide for students to use in the upcoming week. Consider making time in your next class to allow individuals to share their insights from Isaiah 55:1–13 and the invitation to pursue knowing God.

Part 3—Guard against Deception

Recognizing Antichrists

1 John 2:18–23

Say: “The last hour is here” (1 John 2:18, NLT). Since Jesus’ death and resurrection His followers have continued to live in the “last hour.” Jesus warned in Matthew 24:23–25 that false teachers would arise in the last days and cause many to fall away. John saw this happen in his lifetime. He wrote the three letters we call 1, 2, and 3 John to warn believers to be on guard against these “antichrists” by staying faithful to Jesus by knowing God’s Word. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In 1 John 2:18, John used the word *antichrists* to describe the false teachers who rose up within the church he was overseeing. This term can refer to those who oppose the truth of God’s Word or those who present themselves as counterfeit saviors. Either way, believers must be on guard against people who teach concepts contrary to the gospel—whether they come from inside or outside the church.

The apostle assured his readers they had been given the Spirit and could be certain of God’s truth. The Holy Spirit helps believers recognize false teachers who deny Jesus is the Christ and instead try to present a new or different way to experience the goodness of God. Some may accept Scripture as truth to a certain point, but they either add to or diminish the commands of God (see 2 Peter 3:15–17).

Second Peter 2 provides more insight on the dangers of false teachers, specifically those whose teaching was leading individuals into sexual immorality. A modern-day example of this type of false teacher is someone in church leadership who teaches that sexual relations outside of heterosexual marriage are acceptable and not sinful. This teaching leads many people into sin and denies the redeeming power of Jesus. Believers must know the truth of God’s Word and ask the Holy Spirit to uncover any false teachings they may hear or be tempted to believe.

Discuss

- ? The best way to recognize a counterfeit dollar bill is to study the real thing. How does studying God’s Word protect us against false teaching?

- ? How should we respond when we encounter false teaching?
- ? Understanding that we all teach others through our lifestyles and conversations, how can we guard against becoming false teachers ourselves?

Resource Packet Item 3: The Danger of False Teachers

Distribute the worksheet and read 2 Peter 2 together. Then ask students to answer the questions and share their responses with the class. If your time is limited, you may choose to have students complete this worksheet at home.

Remain Faithful

1 John 2:24–29; 3 John 9–11

Say: Jesus invites us to abide or remain in His love (John 15:9) and allow His words to remain in us (verse 7). The best way to protect ourselves against false teaching is to trust His love and believe the truth of His Word. John issued the same challenge in 1 John 2:24–29, warning us about things which can lead us astray. We remain faithful as we enjoy close fellowship with God. Our faithfulness will be demonstrated in righteous living. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Fellowship with God’s people plays an important role in helping us, as believers, remain faithful. We should commit to a church family who believes the Bible is the infallible, authoritative Word of God. Gathering regularly to hear and learn from God’s Word with other believers strengthens our faith. Our world is consistently sending messages to entice us toward the lust of the flesh,” the “lust of the eyes,” and the “pride of life” (2:16, KJV). We need to intentionally connect ourselves with others who believe the truth, remembering that “those who do good prove that they are God’s children, and those who do evil prove that they do not know God” (3 John 11, NLT). Additionally, we should foster relationships within the body of Christ that are centered on the truth of the Bible. These healthy personal relationships will encourage us in our faith and help us recognize false teaching.

Discuss

- ? How can we practically abide in the love of Christ?
- ? How can fellowship with God’s people keep us from believing false teachers and falling away from the truth?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: We reveal that we love and know God when we obey His commands. The clearest way we can do this is to love others. We can’t say we love God and then hate each other. We should be growing in our faith and it should be evidenced by our ever-increasing likeness to Christ, which contrasts with the false teachers all around us. The best way to recognize the lies of the enemy is to know the truth we have received in God’s Word. Our knowledge of God through His Word and our fellowship with Him and each other helps to keep us strong and overcome the evil one.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Make a fresh commitment to focus on loving those in your immediate family by putting into practice the “one another” passages in the New Testament.
- Read through the invitation found in Isaiah 55 and consider how you want to respond to His invitation to seek Him and listen diligently to His Word.
- Meet with someone who is also attending this class to talk about what stood out to you the most in this lesson. Encourage one another to remain faithful to the infallible Word of God.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Growing in Knowledge of God.
Exodus 33:12–23

Tuesday:

Knowing God through
Obedience. Deuteronomy 6:1–9

Wednesday:

Knowing God through Worship.
Psalm 100:1–5

Thursday:

Eternal Life Is Knowing God.
John 17:1–5

Friday:

Making Known the “Unknown”
God. Acts 17:22–31

Saturday:

Knowing Christ’s Power and
Sufferings. Philippians 3:7–14