

Lesson 4
1 John 3
True Christian Love

Memory verse: “Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” (John 14:23 NIV)

1 John 3 warns us that in today’s world there are counterfeit Christians - “children of the devil” (1 John 3:10). But instead of listing the evil characteristics of Satan’s children, the Scripture gives us a clear description of God’s children. The contrast between the two is obvious.

The key verse of this chapter is 1 John 3:10: a true child of God practices righteousness and loves other Christians despite differences. First John 3:1–10 deals with the first topic, and 1 John 3:11–24 takes up the second.

Practicing righteousness and loving the brethren, of course, are not new themes. These two important subjects are treated in the first two chapters of this epistle, but in 1 John 3 the approach is different. In the first two chapters the emphasis was on fellowship: a Christian who is in fellowship with God will practice righteousness and will love the brethren. But in 1 John 3 - 5, the emphasis is on sonship: because a Christian is “born of God,” he will practice righteousness and will love the brethren.

Every great personality mentioned in the Bible sinned at one time or another. Abraham lied about his wife (Gen. 12:10–20). Moses lost his temper and disobeyed God (Num. 20:7–13). Peter denied the Lord three times (Matt. 26:69–75). But sin was not the settled practice of these men. It was an incident in their lives, totally contrary to their normal habits. And when they sinned, they admitted it and asked God to forgive them.

An unsaved person (even if he professes to be a Christian but is a counterfeit) lives a life of habitual sin. Sin - especially the sin of unbelief- is the normal thing in his life (Eph. 2:1–3). He has no divine resources to draw on. His profession of faith, if any, is not real. This is the distinction in view in 1 John 3:1-10: a true believer does not live in habitual sin. He may commit sin - an occasional wrong act - but he will not practice sin - make a settled habit of it.

The difference is that a true Christian knows God. A counterfeit Christian may talk about God and get involved in “religious activities,” but he does not really know God. The person who has been “born of God” through faith in Christ knows God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And because he knows them, he lives a life of obedience: he does not practice sin.

Christians love one another because they have all been born of God, which makes them all brothers and sisters in Christ. When it speaks about brotherhood, the epistle probes much deeper. We are told that loving the brethren is a matter of life and death. “Anyone who does not love remains in death.” (1 John 3:14).

Obedience and love are both evidences of sonship and brotherhood. This truth is first stated in the negative: “Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.” (1 John 3:10b).

Do you know of the only happy and holy way to live life?

To learn in this lesson: 1) Reasons for a holy life 2) Avoid backsliding 3) True Christian love

Discussion Questions:

1) John exhorts the child of God to live a holy life in verses 1 to 10. Why? (15 mins)

2) How can we realistically deal with our life and not move away from a close walk with Christ? (10 mins)

3) There are four levels on which a person may live as explained by John in verses 11 to 24. Why choose the highest level of life which is the level of Christian love? (20mins)