

An In-Depth Study of the First Letter of Apostle John

[Part 3]

1 John 2:3 [NIV] “We know that we have come to **know** him if we obey his commands.”

The translation “know” is the Greek word is used in **Luke 1:34** where Mary is referring to the intimate sexual relationship within marriage between a man and a woman.

John 17:3 [NIV] “Now this is eternal life: that they may **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

The apostle John uses the same Greek word when referring to eternal life with our Creator God.

Ecclesiastes 3:9-11 [NIV] “What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. **He has also set eternity in the hearts of men;** yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”

Every human being has this desire for eternity [Hebrew word “*ôlâm*” referring to the vanishing point or a state without end but also something out of mind.]

This desire is placed in our heart [Hebrew word “*lêb*” referring to the centre of our life, our feeling or even our intellect that is our human spirit – see **Job 32:8**]

For the normal human mind and life this idea is as Hebrew indicates “*out of mind.*”

The apostle John tells us in this letter what will cause this desire to become real and our foremost desire.

Obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ [read **1 John 2:3** again].

1 John 2:4 [NIV] “The man who says, “**I know him,**” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

The person who claims to have an intimate “*direct line*” to God and does **not** obey the words of Jesus Christ just proves to others that they are a liar.

Down through human history many have sought to have a relationship with various gods without living what was an ethical lifestyle.

Most considered the way to this relationship was through the intellect and intense mental activity.

Human beings can fall into the same trap today, this relationship with our Creator God is **not just intellectual.**

Other human beings in the past and today seek to find God and relate to Him in an **emotional experience.**

Meetings are designed to heighten the emotional atmosphere using sensuous music, perfumed incense and marvellous liturgy.

This is not so much knowing God as feeling God, and as such will be transient, like a kind of drug that allows you to escape from normal life.

The apostle John is determined to say unmistakably and without compromise that the only way in which we can know God is through obedience to His Word, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit inspired Christian Bible.

In Christianity intellectual effort and emotional experience are **not** neglected, but they must combine with obedience and moral action.

As we allow the Holy Spirit to open up the scriptures to our understanding, through regular study of the Christian Bible combined with prayer, we will experience great lasting joy that may at times lead to tears of thankfulness.

Christianity is the **only** true religion that offers the greatest privilege but also brings with it the greatest obligation.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

It is **only** through this total surrender of our lives to Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and God the Father that we can worship and praise God.

Then this eternal intimate relationship can start now.

1 John 5:10-12 [NIV] *“Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. **And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.** He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”*

When we believe and live by the words of Jesus Christ, we have eternal life already through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit [**Acts 5:32**].

1 John 2:5 [NIV] *“But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:”*

As we obey the words of Jesus Christ and those of the Holy Spirit inspired apostles, we allow God to fulfil His purpose for our existence.

Genesis 1:26-27 [NIV] *“Then God said, **“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

God’s purpose is only begun as we receive physical life “*image*” through our yielding to the Holy Spirit God can create in us His “*likeness*” [character].

Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

Here are listed the “*fruits*” of the relationship with the Holy Spirit, starting with “*love*” that is the basis of God’s character.

The Greek word translated “*love*” is “*agapé*” a spontaneous affectionate love that is irrespective of the rights or the response of the person receiving this love. A love where any selfish desires are sacrificed in order to show this love to others.

1 John 2:6 [NIV] *“Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.”*

How do we “walk”, live our life as Jesus Christ, the human Son of Man?

Hebrews 9:14 [NIV] *“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who **through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God**, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”*

Note “*through the Holy Spirit*” it was the Holy Spirit working in and through Him that the **human** Jesus Christ accomplished all He did for the rest of humanity.

John 5:19, 30 [NIV] *“Jesus gave them this answer: **“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”** ... “By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”*

Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, only did what He was told to do and did this through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God in Him.

John 8:28-29 [NIV] *“So Jesus said, **“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am [the one I claim to be] and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”***

God the Father was always with Jesus Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9-11 [NIV] *“**You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.**”*

It was the Holy Spirit of the triune God who raised Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, from the dead.

If the same Holy Spirit is in us as was in the human Jesus Christ, we will be raised to eternal life in the same way.

1 John 2:7 [Amplified Bible] *“Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning, the old commandment is the message which you have heard, the doctrine of **salvation through Christ.**”*

This salvation message is based on the love that God has for all humanity.

Hence the apostle John starts the sentence with “*beloved*”.

The Greek word used is “*adelphōs*” referring to a brotherhood of believers who love each other as brothers and sisters in the same family.

When you become a Christian you are entering into a brotherhood relationship with other Christians.

The love you have for others in this new family is a “*philadelphia*” love, expressed in kindness.

Leviticus 19:18 [NIV] *“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but **love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD.**”*

The commandment already stands in the law of the Old Covenant.

It was old in the sense that those hearing John’s message knew the law of love already.

This command was new in that it had been raised to a completely new standard by Jesus Christ.

In Jesus Christ love became new in the lengths to which it would extend.

Matthew 5:43 [NIV] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’”*

The *“hate your enemy”* was implied by the way justice was executed [*“eye for eye”*, etc. **Leviticus 24:17-20**]

Matthew 5:44-48 [NIV] *“But I tell you: **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.** He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

If we are to become part of the created family of God then our love must take on this new standard in our day-to-day life.

1 John 2:8 [NIV] *“Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.”*

With the coming of Jesus Christ into the human world, light was brought to humanity who was living in the darkness of Satan’s deception.

John 8:12 [NIV] *“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, **‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’**”*

Jesus Christ introduced Himself as the light that had come into the human world.

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 [NIV] *“**The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.**” ... **‘For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.’**”*

Referring directly to our Saviour Jesus Christ.

1 John 2:9-11 [NIV] *“**Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.** Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.”*

The apostle John links our love of the brethren to our walking in the light, where Jesus Christ reigns.

John 6:44 [NIV] *“No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

Only a relatively few people are called in each generation to become Christians, and begin to walk in the light. The vast majority remain in deceived darkness where Satan reigns.

Revelation 12:9 [NIV] *“The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”*

The vast majority of humans led astray by Satan.

We all regard other human beings in certain ways.

a) Consider them as negligible

We make our plans without including others. We assume that others' needs, sorrow, welfare and salvation have nothing to do with us. Self-centred, often quite unconsciously.

b) Consider other humans with contempt

Consider other humans as totally unimportant compared to our dignity and prestige. Others' opinions are brushed aside as totally unimportant to us.

c) Consider other humans as a nuisance

Such a person may regard a gift they have to make to charity, or pay for social welfare for the less fortunate, sick or under-privileged as merely a nuisance.

d) May regard other human beings as our enemies

If we regard competition as a law or principle of life this will be our attitude.

Every other person in our profession or trade is someone who may get in our way so must be removed, as an enemy.

e) Consider all other human beings our brothers or sisters

Their needs are our needs; their interests our interests; to serve them is the reason we were given life by our Creator God.

Every human being will fit into one of the above categories. We either love or else we hate our fellow human beings.

The Greek word in **verse 10** could mean that if we love our brother there is nothing in us that will make them stumble.

Remember that hatred and bitterness in our heart obscures the power of sound judgement, stopping us from making wise decisions, even if we do not realise it at the time.

1 John 2:12-14 [NIV] *"I write to you, dear **children**, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I write to you, **fathers**, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, **young men**, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear **children**, because you have known the Father. I write to you, **fathers**, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, **young men**, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one."*

I believe this passage is referring to the spiritual age of Christians rather than the physical age of the people.

Children –

Our spiritual life begins with our acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Saviour and receiving forgiveness of our sins.

John 16:7-8 [NIV] *"But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:"*

With the Holy Spirit working alongside them they are convicted of sin, realise where true righteousness comes from and are aware of a future judgement.

Young men –

John 14:15-17 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

This is when the Holy Spirit starts to work in these Christians. They have applied –

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Such a decision will allow the Holy Spirit to empower them to resist all that Satan may throw at them.

Fathers –

Over the years of knowing Jesus Christ and allowing the fruits of the Holy Spirit to develop in them, such Christians can be examples to those who are yet spiritually children, starting out on their Christian life.

Proverbs 16:31 [Amplified Bible] *“The hoary head is a crown of beauty and glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness, of spiritual and moral rectitude in every area and relation.”*

1 John 2:15-17 [NIV] *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does, comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever.”*

We are still in the context of “light and dark”, those whom God had chosen to call out of darkness and into the light, that revealed the very purpose of our existence as human beings.

We must be careful when we apply this Greek word “kosmos.” We are **not** referring to the physical creation all around us which is God’s creation and God made all things well [**Genesis 1:31**].

The apostle John is referring to human society in so far as it is organised on wrong principles, and based on false values and egoism.

The pagan [those without the knowledge of the true Creator God] society with its false values, false standards and false gods.

It is **not** referring to the human beings as a whole for God loves all humanity [**John 3:16**] but the way Satan had blinded them to the truth.

Matthew 6:24 [Amplified Bible] *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate one and love the other, or he will stand by and be devoted to the one and despise and be against the other. You cannot serve God and mammon, that is, deceitful riches, money, possessions or what is trusted in.”*

The ultimate choice remains the same, we accept the world’s standards or we accept the standards of our Creator God.

The apostle John has three things to say about the person who loves the world and who compromises with it.

The apostle John shows this falls into three categories.

Genesis 3:6 [NIV] *“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”*

All of these sin creating desires were present in the first test of obedience that the Creator God presented the first human beings with. Adam and Eve were helped along into sinful rebellion by Satan.

The fleshly desires –

This is far wider than sexual desires. It encompasses all lust for luxury, worldly ambitions and all selfish aims, a life dominated by the physical senses.

Romans 8:5 [Amplified Bible] *“For those who are according to the flesh and controlled by its unholy desires, set their minds on and pursue those things which gratify the flesh, but those who are according to the spirit and controlled by the desires of the spirit, set their minds on and seek those things which gratify the Holy Spirit.”*

The person controlled by the fleshly desires is forgetful, blind to, or regardless of the commandments of the Creator God and the final judgement of God, the moral standards of God, even the existence of the Creator God.

Anyone who demands pleasure that may hurt others, who lives in luxury while others live in want, who has made a god of their own comforts and their own personal ambition in any part of life, is a bond-slave to their fleshly desires.

Romans 8:8 [Amplified Bible] *“So then those who are living a life in the flesh, catering to the appetites and impulses of their carnal nature cannot please or satisfy God, or be acceptable to Him.”*

The lust of the eyes –

This is when we covet what other people have, or those who identify happiness with prosperity and possessions.

Such people **cannot** see anything without wishing to acquire it, and having acquired it, flaunts it in the faces of other people.

Such people believe that happiness is to be found in which money can buy and the eye can see.

Such people have **no** values other than material value and have concentrated on things that are seen, but temporal and have ignored the things that are unseen and eternal.

The pride of life –

A Greek word used in the phrase is *“alazōnēia”* referring to a person who laid claim to possessions, deeds and achievements that did **not** belong to them in order to impress others and exalt themselves.

Such a person is obsessed with their status and importance in society.

The apostle John then warns that a person who attaches themselves to these worldly aims and worldly ways is giving their lives up to things which literally have **no** future.

All these things are in the process of decay, none of them have any permanency in them.

Such a person whose life is governed by these desires is doomed to disappointment.

In contrast the person who has made the Creator God and His desires central in their lives, will in the end find lasting eternal joy.

Psalms 16:11 [NIV] *“You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”*

The result of putting the Creator God central to all we think and do in this present physical life.