

## Christ's Love as the Rule

I need to stop by the ATM for some cash for the card," I said Kiara to her coworker and lunch date.

"What card?" asked Serena, climbing into the passenger's side of the vehicle.

"The wedding card for Julie," informed Kiara.

"I don't want to sign that card, let alone put any money in it," said Serena, frowning. "That woman has been nothing but nasty to us."

"Don't be that way," Kiara said. "God doesn't like ugly."

"Well, He must not like Julie," said Serena. "But I forgot, you've got to do the Jesus thing."

Kiara smiled. She had consistently shared Christ with her coworker, to which Serena often said, "You do you."

Truth was, earlier this year, Kiara was struggling with her interactions with Julie. She had asked God to help her love her manager. The more Kiara prayed, the more help she seemed to get. But that wasn't to say that her assignment had been or even was now—easy.

Back in the office, Kiara found the interoffice envelope. She put in \$50 and wrote a warm note.

"I just don't get you," Serena said as Kiara came back to their cubicle. "How can you ignore your feelings and show love to that woman?"

"It's not easy," replied Kiara. "Love is an action, not a feeling. And the Holy Spirit empowers me to do what is right."

**1.** *What should be our response to God's sacrificial love for us?*

**2.** *What does it mean to walk in what is right?*

**3.** *If you know God personally, why should you always desire to walk in what is right?*

## We Are Children of God

*1 John 3:1-5, KJV*

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

*1 John 3:1-5, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

<sup>2</sup>Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup>All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

<sup>4</sup>Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup>But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.

In verse 1, John reminded his readers that they were not only his “children” in the faith—more importantly, they (and the apostle himself) were children of God. “And that is what we are!” At the same time, he reminded them that their status as God’s children was only possible because of the “great love the Father has lavished on us.” It was this knowledge and love of God, given from God, that separated them from the world: “The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.” Therefore, they were not to be surprised at the alienation and hostility they faced from the world; Jesus faced the same.

It is no surprise that early Christians felt different from the world around them. In their Greek religious environment, few people had even heard the name of Jesus. And Jews who did not accept Jesus as their Messiah were not likely to welcome Jesus' followers in synagogues either.

Therefore, John encouraged believers, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known." Whatever their future glory actually looked like, they could take comfort in the standing they already had before God as His children. John was, however, able to tell his readers one thing for certain: "When Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (vs. 2). The future was unimaginable, but it was glorious. It was eternity with Christ, in Christ, being made like Christ. Therefore, "All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure" (vs. 3). Believers were to participate with the Spirit in being made more like Christ, even as they persevered on Earth.

John then described the opposite of purity: "Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness" (vs. 4). To invert verse 3, those who did not hope in Christ did not purify themselves, and did so willfully. Those who persisted in sin did not know God. Again, John reminded readers why Jesus had come to Earth: "so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin" (vs. 5). Because Jesus took believers' sins upon Himself, believers could turn to Him, even when they sinned, to be purified and to return to walk in the light with Him (1 John 1:7, 9). This was to be their hope.

**4.** *What did John say about believers (vs. 1)? What difficulties would nonetheless result from that?*

**5.** *What did John tell them about their future? How were they to respond in light of this?*

**6.** *What did John say about sin and why Jesus came to Earth?*

## God's Children Don't Continually Sin

1 *John 3:6-10, KJV*

6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

1 *John 3:6-10, NIV*

<sup>6</sup>No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

<sup>7</sup>Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. <sup>8</sup>The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. <sup>9</sup>No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

<sup>10</sup>This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

John then made a startling declaration: "No one who lives in him [Jesus] keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him" (vs. 6). The key phrases here were "keeps on sinning" and "continues to sin." As John made clear elsewhere, believers would stumble; but they also could turn to Jesus to ask Him for forgiveness. In this verse, John spoke to the condition of those who willfully persisted in sin, not those who

stumbled. Turning back to Jesus and abiding in Him are what would keep believers from continuing in, or returning to, their sin.

Those who persisted in sin, therefore, were not to be trusted or followed. As Jesus Himself also declared, believers would be known by their fruit (Matt. 7:15-20). John emphasized the point: "Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. The one who does what is sinful is of the devil" (vss. 7-8). Sin had been the devil's work from the beginning—and it was this work that Jesus had come to destroy (vs. 8). Once more John reiterated, "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God" (vs. 9). The new nature Jesus had given believers was in fact what would prevent them from continuing in sin.

Thus, John concluded this section with a simple litmus test to "know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are." Those who did right and loved their brothers and sisters were God's children; those who did not were of the devil (vs. 10). While John's words might have sounded harsh, Jesus said nearly the same when He declared to the Pharisees that they were "children of the devil," rather than "children of Abraham," let alone children of God (John 8:39-47). Belief and action are not separate issues; each proves the other. Those who believe will walk in righteousness and keep walking in it.

**7.** *What declaration did John make in verse 6? What did he mean by it?*

**8.** *How were believers to respond to those who persisted in sin? What did John say about such people?*

**9.** *How were believers to distinguish God's children from the devil's children?*

## A Desire to Please

There was no strike of lightning or tongues of fire over my head the night I became God's child. I fell to my knees and asked God to both forgive my sins and to show me His plans for my life. I surrendered my life to God when I prayed and accepted Christ as my Savior and Lord.

My friends, those who witnessed my walking forward at youth camp to make the life-changing decision, didn't understand what I was doing. But inwardly, I knew a change had happened. In choosing to become God's child, I desired to learn how to follow His plan and not my own.

I noticed a change right away. As my friends gathered in secret to smoke after chapel, I went along. But I couldn't join in. The Holy Spirit reminded me of the pastor's message earlier in the week: our bodies are God's temple. As God's child, I knew that I needed to stop harming my body. I wasn't trying to be better than my friends. I just desired to walk in a way that pleased God.

During the next few years of high school, I struggled to walk with God. But as I grew closer to Him by reading and studying His Word, my desires to do or think about things that didn't please God diminished. More and more, I could hear the Holy Spirit guiding me how to live. For example, I lost the desire to watch certain shows all about behaviors displeasing to God. Later I chose friends who were also walking with God. They gave me accountability and encouragement. Those decisions opened opportunities to share Jesus with others in my life.

It's still a daily choice to obey God, but it gets easier the more I experience all that He has done for me. My desire is to please Him daily by living according to His Word.

**10.** *What does it mean to be a child of God?*

**11.** *What role do God's Word and the Holy Spirit have in equipping you to walk right?*

**12.** *How should your life be different from those who don't know God?*

## Walking with God

Micah 6:8 said to walk with God in three simple and practical ways: “What does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” First, our daily actions should be *just* as we make fair decisions, loving others as we love ourselves. Second, to love *mercy* is demonstrated by showing unconditional love, forgiveness, and compassion to others—even those who don’t deserve mercy. Third, to *walk humbly* with your God is to communicate with your heavenly Father through prayer, meditation, and reading His Word.

► *As God’s child, are you ready to walk rightly before God and others? What are some practical steps you can take to do so?*

### KEY VERSE

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. —1 John 3:1, KJV

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. —1 John 3:1, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

#### Week of August 12 through August 18

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Deuteronomy 32:1-6—The Lord Is Just and Upright.
- Tues.** 1 Corinthians 6:9-20—Bought with a Price.
- Wed.** Romans 12:9-21—A Godly Life Overcomes Evil.
- Thurs.** Proverbs 15:20-25—Walking a Straight Path.
- Fri.** Psalm 37:27-40—God Rescues the Righteous.
- Sat.** Jonah 2:1-9—Salvation Comes from the Lord.
- Sun.** Titus 1:1-3; 2:11-15—God’s Grace Purifies.