

## Get into the Study



5 MINUTES

**ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL):** Play a video illustrating someone who exudes confidence. Then ask **Question #1**.

NOTE: A video option can be found at [BibleStudiesForLife.com/AdultExtra](http://BibleStudiesForLife.com/AdultExtra).

**DISCUSS:** **Question #1** on page 24 of the PSG: **“Who do you know that almost always exudes confidence?”**



**GUIDE:** Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 25 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of having a relationship with God by reading or summarizing the text or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

## SESSION 2

# Sure of a Relationship

### THE POINT

My relationship with God is reflected in how I live.

### LIFE CONNECTION

Only in Christ is salvation possible. Other belief systems attempt to point us to ways we can be in good standing with God, but they are all based on our efforts. From that vantage point, no one can ever be sure they’ve done enough—or have done the right thing. Salvation comes through Jesus because of what He has done, and the way we live after coming to Him in faith reassures us that we have been saved and transformed by Him.

### THE PASSAGE

1 John 2:3-11,15-17

### THE SETTING

John, the Beloved Apostle, wrote 1 John, perhaps from his exile on Patmos in the mid-90s AD. First John is a letter of assurance (1 John 5:13). John began by establishing his credentials as an eyewitness. Then he described the character of God: “God is light” (1:5). Next John revealed three false claims and responded with three of God’s truths about forgiveness (1:6–2:2). Then John discussed believers’ relationships with God (2:3-17).

## 1 JOHN 2:3-6

**3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.**

**4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**

**5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.**

**6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.**

**KEY WORD:** **Abideth** (v. 6)—This refers to remaining in God or Christ and reveals a permanent relationship. We cannot claim to abide in Christ unless we live like Him.

**1** ▶ **Verse 3.** We are to live in obedience to God’s commands. In the Bible, *walk* (v. 6) means to live in this way, to live according to this standard. The Bible teaches that truth is not so much revealed in what we say as it is in how we live. How we live reveals who we really are. John included three tests in 1 John 2. They are: (1) the test of moral obedience (1 John 2:3-6); (2) the test of social character (vv. 7-11); and (3) the test of doctrinal confession (vv. 18-27).

The opening Greek word rendered *and* points back to the central message in chapter 1: “God is light” (1:5). This conjunction is essential in connecting the message of 1:5 with that of 2:3—the assurance of knowing the God who is light.

The word **know** is used twenty-six times in 1 John and two hundred twenty-one times in the Greek New Testament. It was a favorite term of the false teachers; John used this term against them. To *know* God involves knowledge of His character leading to the resulting requirement—obedience. A paraphrase of verse 3 is: “This is the test to see whether or not we are really Christians: if we keep His commandments.” Keeping Jesus’ commands is not a *prerequisite* of salvation but rather the *result* of salvation demonstrated in the believer’s life. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated: “Only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes.” In his Gospel account John recalled Jesus’ words: “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

We are sure of our relationship with God through Jesus because His indwelling Spirit enables us to change our behavior to reflect God’s character; we reveal this by

**RECAP:** When life is full of unknowns, confidence and assurance can disappear. In their place come fear and doubt. We all need confidence and assurance, and when it comes to living the Christian life, confidence and assurance become critical. David Allen said trying to live the Christian life without either is “like driving a car with the brakes on.” These passages show us we can take our foot off the brakes!

**GUIDE:** Call attention to “The Point” on page 25 of the PSG: “My relationship with God is reflected in how I live.”

**PRAY:** Transition into the study by asking God to help the group understand the importance of our relationship with Him. Thank Him for valuing us and desiring to have a relationship with us.

## Study the Bible

### 1 John 2:3-6



10 MINUTES

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud 1 John 2:3-6 on page 26 of the PSG.

**RECAP:** In short order in these passages, John used the word *know* four times. John wrote that Christians can know with certainty they are in a relationship with God. Assurance of salvation is based on the right conditions. The right conditions for a Christian to have the assurance of his or her relationship with God result from walking in obedience to God's commands. We don't obey out of legalism, but out of gratitude for all God has given us, especially the gift of His Son.

Obedience is the natural outcome of the new birth. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). We demonstrate our love for Jesus through our obedience. Therefore, if we lack assurance of salvation, all we need to do is to look at the pattern of obedience in our lives. Obedience to God's commands doesn't save us; we are saved by grace through our faith in Jesus, the One who kept the law perfectly. Now we obey because we have that relationship.

**GUIDE:** Use Commentary **1** on pages 31-33 to help explain what it means to remain in Christ.

obedience to His commands. Verse 3 gives us assurance of our relationship with God following our salvation.

**Verse 4.** The truth John stated positively in verse 3, he restated negatively in verse 4. **He that saith** addressed false teachers but applies to anyone who views finding God as an intellectual exercise or an emotional experience without moral obligation. In Christianity, intellectual effort and emotional experience are joined by moral action. The conduct of these false teachers contradicted their profession that they knew God. In essence, John declared: "If people say they have been saved and do not practice God's commands, they are liars; the truth is not in them."

**Verse 5.** In contrast to verse 4, John here addressed the true believer, the one who **keepeth his word**. John affirmed **in him verily** (the person who keeps God's Word, His commands) **is the love of God perfected**. This word for **love** (*agape*) is used one hundred sixteen times in the Greek New Testament, 25 percent in John's writings (about half of these in 1 John). *Agape* love is not an emotional response; rather it is the treatment of others in accordance with God's will (God's character). Later John stated: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (1 John 5:3). Scholars understand the phrase **love of God** in three basic ways: (1) God's love for man; (2) man's love for God; and (3) God's type of love. In this context, number 3 seems to be the best understanding, although number 2 has merit.

**Is ... perfected** means "is completed," "is matured," "is brought to fruition," "is realized in fulfillment," and "has been perfected." This means there is no such thing as genuine love for Christ that does not result in obedience to Him.

Does the phrase, **hereby know we that we are in him**, go with verse 5 or verse 6? Does it go with love being made perfect or walking "as he walked"? Along with many other New Testament scholars, I think this phrase goes better with walking as Jesus walked (v. 6). However, many scholars choose to discuss the phrase with verse 5. Punctuation and verse divisions can help readers understand the message. However, these reader aids are not part of the original inspired New Testament text. The meaning of the phrase reflects the believer's assurance of salvation experienced by living out God's commands.

**Verse 6.** The word **walk** reflects a lifestyle of keeping God’s commandments, or put another way, keeping His Word. The word rendered **abideth** is used twenty-seven times in John’s letters and refers to remaining in God or Christ. It reveals a permanent relationship. We cannot claim to abide in Christ unless we live like Him. The answer to the question “Am I saved?” is revealed in the answer to the questions: “Does my daily life reflect Jesus’ life?” and the question: “Do I live in obedience to God?” Living in obedience to God’s commands reflects a believer’s salvation. ◀

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## 1 JOHN 2:7-11

**7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.**

**8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.**

**9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.**

**10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.**

**11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.**

**2▶ Verse 7.** Walking in the light can keep us from being blinded by the darkness. John’s primary purpose in writing 1 John was to assure Christians of salvation. Seemingly, his secondary purpose was to convict those who are not Christians. In this section John wrote that a person can know if he or she is a Christian by a series of tests: (1) the moral test of obedience (2:3-6, love for God); (2) the social test of love (2:7-11, love for others); and (3) the doctrinal test of belief in Christ (2:18-27).

John specifically addressed this section of verses to his **brethren**, or translated more literally as *beloved*. This Greek word refers to God’s type of love, the love that is given but is not earned. This was John’s favorite form of address in this letter; he used it six times. In John’s account of the last supper, Jesus said: “A new

**DISCUSS:** Question #2 on page 27 of the PSG: “**What do you find challenging about walking in Jesus’ footsteps?**”

*Alternate: What does walking like Jesus look like?*

**RECAP:** True love for God is reflected through gracious obedience to His commands. If you desire to obey the Word out of gratitude for all Christ has done for you, and if you see that desire producing an overall pattern of obedience, then you have no reason to doubt your salvation. Your relationship with God is reflected in how you live.

**TRANSITION:** We are to walk in obedience to God’s commands. In the next verses, we see that we are also to walk in the light so that we don’t go blind.

## Study the Bible

### 1 John 2:7-11



**10 MINUTES**

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud 1 John 2:7-11 on page 28 of the PSG.

**RECAP:** “Love” or “loveth” repeatedly shows up in 1 John. It appears 24 times in the 105 verses that make up this letter. In this passage John wrote of love as both an old and new commandment. Love is an old commandment in that it is mentioned in the Old Testament law (Lev. 19:17-18; Deut. 6:5). In fact, Jesus said the entirety of the law could be summed up in the commands “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 22:37-40).

**GUIDE:** Use Commentary **2** on pages 33-35 to help explain how the old commandment is also a new one.

commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35). John repeated this new and old commandment in 1 John 2:7. The Greek New Testament uses two primary words rendered **new**. One has to do with time (our word *chronology*); the other, used here, has to do with extent, quality. The commandment to love was old in the sense that it had been known for a long time (throughout the Old Testament: Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). Yet the commandment to love was new because in Jesus Christ, love reached a standard that it had never known before.

**Verse 8.** John specifically addressed the new aspect of God’s command in 1 John 2:8. In what sense was this a **new commandment**? It was in at least five senses: (1) the sense of love because of fellowship with God; (2) the sense of the standard of love for others being Jesus’ love; (3) the sense of love with humility; (4) the sense of love resulting in self-sacrifice; and (5) the sense of love resulting from regeneration of believers.

The words **true in him and in you** reflect that the command is made alive or proven true in action. The word is used seventeen times in John’s writings. It refers to how the light Jesus brought into the world shines in Christians (“I am the light of the world” John 8:12). The result is that the **darkness is past; the true light now shineth**. Here **light** refers to goodness, righteousness; **darkness** refers to evil, sin. Imagine a scene of the world beginning to be illuminated by the first few rays of light; there are still places of darkness, but light is on its way. Wherever there are disciples of Jesus Christ, there is light. Jesus told His disciples: “Ye are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). To the extent we unite our lives with God through Christ, we are light. To the extent we let our old nature control our life, we are living in the flesh.

**Verse 9.** John revealed the behavior resulting in darkness: hate. **He that saith he is** refers to false teachers—or anyone else who meets the conditions laid out. Most of the time in the New Testament, **brother** refers to Christians (male and female). John was saying, “In the same way light and darkness cannot be in the same place, love and hate cannot be in the same person.” The genuineness of faith is

seen in right relation to God (to keep His commandments, v. 3) and people (to love others, vv. 9,10). Love and hate are similar to two sides of the same coin; the absence of one means the presence of the other. Hate reveals the presence of sin and the absence of righteousness.

**Verse 10.** What John stated negatively in verse 9, he stated positively in verse 10. John did not write “whoever *says* he loves.” Rather, John wrote **he that loveth his brother.** John was much more concerned with action than speech.

The word **stumbling** refers to acting in ways contrary to God’s revealed will; this is also called darkness, unrighteousness, or sin. What did John mean by **none occasion of stumbling in him?** (Our English word *scandal* comes from the word rendered *stumbling*.) He meant the Christian will (1) recognize temptation; (2) refuse temptation; and (3) lead others toward Christ, not away from Him. The light—Christ’s Spirit living in us—shines on our path and lights the way so we will have no reason to stumble or to lead others to stumble.

**Verse 11.** John listed in this verse three results of hate. First, the person who hates **is in darkness**, sin. Second, that person **walketh in darkness.** In his letters John always used *walketh* in the sense of one’s lifestyle. Third, that person **knoweth not whither he goeth.** John then revealed the reason: **because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.** Whenever we hate, it hurts us more than what or whom we hate. The more we yield to hate (sin), the more we blind ourselves and the less we see of God. The result of continuous, lifestyle sinning is that we harden our hearts toward God (we blind ourselves) and therefore cannot respond to His call.

Love enables us to walk in the light; hatred leaves us in the dark. Sin separates us from both God and one another. Love for God (v. 3) and for people (v. 10) promotes fellowship. Therefore, it is not only the absence of habitual sin that characterizes the life of the believer; it is also the presence of love. My relationship with God is reflected in how I live. ◀

**RECAP:** The *light* John referred to is God’s kingdom, which was inaugurated at Christ’s first coming: “the true light now shineth.” Jesus is “the light of the world” (John 8:12), and His kingdom is characterized by both light and love. Our love for God and for others is proof we are citizens of that heavenly kingdom.

Loving as Christ loves doesn’t come easily. Love can be costly. The love of the Good Samaritan cost him (Luke 10:30-36). God’s love for us led Him to the costly sacrifice of His Son. But when we love sacrificially, we are reflecting the love of God, and we are reflecting a right relationship with God. Of course, there will be times when we don’t love as we should, but the Christian life is characterized by light, not darkness; love, not hate.

**DISCUSS:** Question #3 on page 30 of the PSG: “**How would you describe spiritual blindness?**”

*Alternate: How does our culture get love wrong?*

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## 1 JOHN 2:15-17

**15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

**ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL):**

**In advance**, enlist two volunteers. Have the first volunteer close his or her eyes (or wear a blindfold) and walk around the room by voice commands from the second volunteer. Be sure the first volunteer has someone close by to keep from falling over something. After the experiment, have the first volunteer share the experience about walking in the darkness. Make the point that we need to walk in Christ's light by obeying His voice through His Word.

**TRANSITION:** In the next verses, we see that we are to walk in the will of God, not the ways of the world.

**Study the Bible****1 John 2:15-17****15 MINUTES**

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud 1 John 2:15-17 on page 30 of the PSG.

**DISCUSS:** **Question #4** on page 31 of the PSG: **“What are some things in the world we are tempted to love?”**

**16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.**

**17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.**

**3 ▶ Verse 15.** We have seen two of 1 John 2's series of three tests that reveal our relationship with God as reflected in how we live—the test of moral obedience (vv. 3-6) and the test of social character (vv. 7-11). The third test, the test of doctrinal confession (vv. 18-27), will be the focus of our next session. But first, let's look at another way to describe the first half of 1 John 2 by understanding how this passage impacts the way we live (walk). Verses 3-6 teach us to walk in obedience to God's commands. Verses 7-11 teach us to walk in the light so we won't go blind. Verses 12-14 describe the best way we can walk in the light: remember who we are and what God has done for us. Verses 15-17 instruct us to walk in the will of God, not in the ways of the world. Let's camp here a little.

God commands us: **love not the world** in the first part of verse 15. The command not to love the world is founded on two arguments: (1) the incompatibility of love for God and for the world and (2) the transient nature of the world contrasted with God's permanence (v. 17). John used the term *the world* to describe both pagan society and its standards. Worldliness lies in attitudes that result in sinful actions.

The next part of verse 15 defines the consequences of disobeying the command not to love the world. John described the choice our actions reveal: if you love the world, you cannot love the Father. Our actions demonstrate where our love resides, **the Father or the world**. Put another way, God commands us to walk in the will of God, not in the ways of the world. By stating **the love of the Father is not in him**, John revealed the lack of salvation for those who love the world. The choice is clear: either we love the world or we love God; there is no in between.

**Verse 16.** John exposed what loving the world means with three specific examples. Not loving the world means not participating in its ways and values. The first example of loving the world is the **lust** [or desire resulting in

action] **of the flesh**. The New Testament uses the term *flesh* when referring to our sin nature. Frequently the word refers to our sinful nature. Thus, **lust of the flesh** describes judging anything by material standards, making a god of worldly pleasures. It is blind to the commands, judgments, standards, and perhaps even existence of God.

The second example of loving the world is the **lust [desire] of the eyes**. This means to be captivated by outward show. This lust sees nothing without wanting it. This is not merely the attitude that recognizes an object is beautiful; it is the attitude that says: “I’ve got to have it.” The misplaced belief is this: happiness can be found only in what we see.

The third example of loving the world is the **pride of life**. This attitude describes a person who spends his or her time trying to impress others with possessions, positions, or accomplishments—a braggart. This attitude is based on security coming from what we have, not from a relationship with God. John’s final statement in this verse deals with the origin of **all that is in the world**. John stressed that the origin of such **is not of the Father, but is of the world**. Understanding this verse helps us walk in the will of God, not in the ways of the world.

**Verse 17.** John stressed the temporary nature of **the world ... along with everything that people crave**. Then John contrasted the world’s temporary nature with God’s permanent nature: **But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever**. The world with its lusts is temporary; these things are victims of change, decay, and the result of sin: death (Jas. 1:15). However, the reward for the one who does the will of God is that he or she **will live forever**. This describes life in the present as well as life in eternity. This life is quantitatively and qualitatively different, life as it was meant to be lived. John also wrote: “He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever” (Rev. 21:4).

My relationship with God is reflected in how I live. The best way for a person to walk in the light is to remember who he or she is and what God has done for him or her. The world’s standards are deceiving and temporary. The person who does God’s will has been promised life: eternal and spiritually abundant in this world and the next one. Having received this gift from God, we must walk in obedience to God’s commands and walk in the light so we won’t go blind. We must walk in the will of God, not in the ways of the world. ◀

**SUMMARIZE:** Highlight the main points from page 31 of the PSG. The world’s temptations can be grouped into three categories:

1. **The lust of the flesh.** *This is the desire for selfish pleasure; the person who cares more about himself than others.*
2. **The lust of the eyes.** *This type of temptation is tied to the greedy longing for gain, always wanting more but never satisfied.*
3. **The pride of life.** *This temptation refers to envy and the love of popularity, recognition, and applause.*

**GUIDE:** Use Commentary **3** on pages 36-37 to help explain the temptations of the world.

**ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL):** **In advance**, enlist a group member or someone from your church to give a testimony about their relationship with Christ. Invite them to tell how they came to Christ and how their relationship with Him has grown as they have learned to live obediently.



**LEADER PACK:** Display **Item 3: Worldly Temptations** poster to give group members an opportunity to apply lessons from this passage. Invite group members to collaborate to fill in the poster.

WORLDLY TEMPTATIONS			
	Worldly Temptation	Scripture Reference	Prayer Request
<b>LUST OF THE FLESH</b>	Not having to read Bible every day	Matthew 6:1-18	
<b>LUST OF THE EYES</b>	Watching videos of things that are not good	Matthew 23:1-12	
<b>PRIDE OF LIFE</b>	Not having to read Bible every day	Matthew 23:1-12	

**DISCUSS:** Question #5 on page 32 of the PSG: **“How can our group help one another overcome the ways of the world in our lives?”**

*Alternate: What are some examples of the things in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life?*

**DO:** Direct group members to complete “Engage” on page 32 of the PSG to help reinforce “The Point.”

**GUIDE:** Refer back to “The Point” for this session: **“My relationship with God is reflected in how I live.”**

**ENGAGE**

**Choose one of the following images that best represents an opportunity for you to live obediently this week. Then ask God for strength to make it happen.**



## LIVE IT OUT

My relationship with God is reflected in how I live. Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Examine your life.** Consider the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. If, after examining your life, you feel as though you have fallen short in manifesting a true Christian's character, then repent and trust in Christ now.
- ▶ **Align your life.** Perhaps through this study, you have been assured of your relationship with God. However, you also realize there are a few things in your life that need to be realigned under God's will. If so, begin making those changes this week.
- ▶ **Make a difference in someone else's life.** Be intentional this week to share about your relationship with Christ. Look for opportunities to serve someone, and when you see it, don't hesitate. Serving others gives a great opportunity for sharing the gospel.

## Live It Out



5 MINUTES

**READ:** Direct group members to page 33 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the applications to carry out this week.

## Wrap It Up

**SUMMARIZE:** Read or restate this idea from page 32 of the PSG:

*The person who seeks the things of God rather than the things of the world is someone who is prepared for eternity—and you can be assured of that. Let your life reflect your relationship with God.*

**PRAY:** Thank God for establishing a relationship with us. Ask Him to help group members honor that relationship by living in obedience to Him.



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