



NG Study Guide: 1Jn. 2.1-7 “Live to Please God” [3.11.18]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis:

Throughout this letter, the apostle John sets forth tests so that you can know that you have real life with God. The first test, living to please God, is described in this section. What comes to mind when you think of living to please God? Together we'll discover three essential ways that we live to please God. John has described the incomparable blessings of real life with God (eternal life), the obstacle of our sin, and the need to experience a spiritual birth and receive God's forgiveness in Christ to deal with sin [Ch. 1]. Now John reveals the first test(s) to see if we have real life with God.

Jesus' followers eliminate sin in their life [1-2]

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

John calls the believers, *my little children* [1]. John was in the winter of his life and displays a fatherly love as he corrects and warns. He wrote this letter to keep us from a life characterized by sin [1]. Thus, we are called to live to please God. Sin separates us from God, grieves God, and hurts us and others. Being a follower of Jesus requires a high moral and ethical standard. Because God is all holy, He cannot condone sin without a penalty being paid. To the woman caught in adultery, Jesus did not condemn her, but admonished her, “To go and sin no more” [Jn.8:11]. He was compassionate, but there was no compromise. He didn't tell her to sin less or sin just a little.

Jesus' followers are right with God because of His sacrifice not their perfection

Regardless of how much you are truly trying to follow Jesus, you will never measure up to perfection this side of eternity. We will either fail to have the right attitude or take the right action, or we will have the wrong attitude or take the wrong action. When we blow it, Jesus is our *Advocate* [1]. The

Greek *parakletos* literally means to come along side, and the word is often translated helper, especially referring to the Holy Spirit. He is called Jesus Christ the righteous [1], which reminds us that we rely upon His righteousness given to us when we receive Him as Lord and Savior rather than our own righteousness.

Jesus Himself is the *propitiation for our sins* [2]. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross paid the penalty for our sins against God. God is all holy, loving, and all just. Justice requires that a penalty be paid for our sin. In the Mosaic Law a sin offering was made for God's people in the morning and evening not for any particular sin, but because man sins against God.

Imagine a courtroom scene: God the Father is the judge, you are the guilty accused, Satan is the prosecutor or accuse [Rev. 12:10]. Jesus defends you and has paid your sentence [Zech. 3:1-7]. In effect, although you are guilty, the case is dismissed if you are a follower of Jesus.

The reference to *the whole world* means that the blood of Jesus is sufficient to restore all who receive Him. It is not support for universalism - the idea that all people are saved. Only those who receive Christ become children of God [Jn. 1:12, Jn. 3:16].

Jesus' followers obey Him [3-5]

³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

God's grace and forgiveness are not a license to sin

Obedying Jesus is evidence of real love. *If we keep His commandments we know that we know Him* [3]. Jesus transforms your life with God and your life with sin. If you say that you have a relationship with God (i.e. that you know Him), but you don't seek to obey His commandments you are deceiving yourself and others, and the truth of God is not really in you [4]. The test of a true relationship with God is a true desire to obey. The Gnostic philosophers claimed to have special knowledge about God, but did not seek to obey. Thus, they clearly did not know Jesus. Knowing about is an intellectual issue, but knowing is an experiential life-giving spiritual relationship.

"To know God is to experience His love in Christ and return that love in obedience" - C.H. Dodd.

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him [5]. Three times in verses 3-5 John refers to keeping God's commands or word meaning obedience as the test of a real relationship with God. Obedience is a response to the love of God, *truly the love of God is perfected in him* [5]. Perfected refers to mature or complete. Hours before the cross, Jesus told His disciples that since they loved Him they would obey His commands, "If you love Me you will keep My commandments" [Jn.14:15].

They had been with Jesus for three years and their relationship with him had matured, in response to His love for them. So to speak, they were almost ready for commencement. Once they had received the Holy Spirit a few weeks later, and because of their love for Jesus they would keep His commandments. Their primary motivation was love, not fear or rewards, but love for Christ in response to God's love for them through Christ.

Jesus' followers seek to imitate Him [6-7]

⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. ⁷ Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.

People who claim to *abide* or be connected to Jesus should live as Jesus lived (walk as He walked) [6]. Previously, John urged us to, "walk in the light as He is in the light" [1:7]. John is repeating the exhortation to imitate Jesus, because that is how you fulfill the old commandments to avoid sin and obey God [7].

Jesus is the model for a life that pleases God

We are to learn from Jesus' words and works [Matt. 11:28-30], and imitate Him. To be Jesus' disciples requires us to deny ourselves and our will, and submit to Him and His will, *Jesus said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it"* [Lu. 9:23-24]. If you are seeking to imitate Jesus to please God, you'll be transformed and will know that you have real life with God (eternal life). This will be the most satisfying for you, glorifying for God, and beneficial for those that you love and influence.

Finally, the apostle Paul told the church at Corinth, "Imitate me. Just as I also imitate Christ" [1Cor. 11:1]. He was confident that if they followed his example that they would learn to walk as Jesus walked. Consider, who are the examples that you are following and learning from? Who are your mentors that are helping you to live to please God? Also, do you feel confident that people who are imitating your life are learning to walk as Jesus walked? What changes will you make to live for God?

Study Guide Qs

Q1. What are some of the challenges believers face when trying to eliminate sin in their lives?

Q2. John describes obedience as the evidence of a real relationship with Jesus. John and Jesus both relate obedience to the love of God in Christ. How have you discovered the connection between God's love and obedience in your life?

Q3 How have you sought to walk as Christ walked or imitate Him? Describe some specific changes that have taken place in your life as you're being transformed to be more like Jesus?

Q4. What advice would you give to someone who genuinely wants to live to please God but isn't sure how to do it?

"Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. Who are the examples that you are following and learning from? Who are your mentors who are helping you to live to please God? If you aren't able to identify mentors, seek to identify potential mentors in your group or outside of your group that you can regularly learn with and from.

2. Do you feel confident that people who are imitating your life are learning to walk as Jesus walked?

Who are you mentoring to help them live for God? One of the best ways to grow and live for God is to pass to others what you have received from Christ. Look to develop mentor relationships as soon as you can.

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

As you have befriended and built relationships with neighbors where you live, work, study, and play invite them to join you to celebrate Easter. Pray before inviting and continue to pray after you invite them.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.

3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. Every time you meet consider asking:

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.