

PREACHING CURRICULUM

The Love Test

1 John 2:1-17; 3:11-24

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

1 REVIEW THE SERMON

LEADER NOTES: Encourage your members to pull out their notes and review the main points of the sermon. (9-12 mins)

Read 1 John 2:1-11. What does it mean for Jesus Christ to be our “advocate” (verse 1) and “the propitiation for our sins” (verse 2)? Why does John start out this section of his letter with these two ideas? How do these two truths about Christ help us when we sin?

According to this text, how can we know for sure that we are true Christians? What are the two characteristics of a true Christian John mentions in this text? By contrast, what are the marks of a false or counterfeit Christian?

Read 1 John 2:12-14. Who are the children, fathers, and young men John is addressing in these verses? Why does John use such warm, encouraging, and pastoral language to address them? How are these verses connected to the two “tests of authenticity” John discusses in the previous verses?

2 ASSESS YOUR LIFE

LEADER NOTES: Evaluate the condition of your lives in relation to the truth from God's Word. Encourage heart examination. (12-15 mins)

Consider the following two hypothetical individuals:

1. The person who says he believes in Jesus, but continues to live a life of unrepentant immorality. Nothing changes in his life, and he just doesn't seem to care. When confronted about it, he says, “I believe in Jesus. I prayed the sinner's prayer when I was 11, so I know I'm going to heaven. After all, ‘once saved always saved’. I have freedom in Christ.”
2. The person who, after believing in Jesus, insists that our ultimate and final salvation is dependent on us maintaining a lifestyle of complete holiness and purity at all times.

How has each of these individuals misunderstood the Gospel? What half-truths have they managed to grasp, and what have they left out? How might their distorted beliefs affect their lives?

3 APPLY THE TRUTH

LEADER NOTES: Create a list of ways to close the gap between your lives and the truth of the Bible. Be practical and intentional. (12-15 mins)

What is the difference between the *cause of our salvation* and the *effects of our salvation*? Why is it important to maintain this distinction clearly in our minds? What might happen if we get them confused?

How can we appropriately assess the genuineness of our Christian profession by applying the “obedience test” and the “love test” to our lives? How can we apply these two tests without slipping into a “works-righteousness” mentality? In the worst case, what should we do if we discover that we fail one or both of these tests?

4 COMMIT THIS WEEK

LEADER NOTES: Call your small group members to make a commitment and get the group working together to follow-up with each other. (9-12)

What would it look like for you to keep God's commandments and to love others this week? Can you think of some practical steps you can take?

