

Deep Walk- Lesson 2

1 John 1:5–7; 2:3–6; 3:7–10

Part 1 Identify the Issue

We often say that a real Christian is someone who has accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior. That sounds pretty definitive, but is that all it takes—praying a prayer or raising your hand in church? I heard about a t-shirt that says, “And they’ll know we are Christians by our t-shirts.” Three out of four Americans describe themselves as Christians. How do you know if you are a true Christian?

In his letter, John proposes three tests that reveal whether or not a person truly is a Christian. There’s the doctrinal test (What do you believe?), the ethical test (How do you live?), and the relational test (Who do you love?).

The entire letter is organized around these three tests.

Discussion Questions:

[Q] What are the marks of a Christian?

[Q] What makes you think you are a Christian?

[Q] Of the three tests (what you believe, how you live, who you love), which are the easiest to outwardly, see? The hardest?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: God is light.

Everybody has a slightly different idea of what it means to go deeper. To some people it means deeper knowledge of the Bible, so they're looking for meaty studies with lots of Greek words and cross references. To others it means deeper experiences with Christ. They're looking for greater intimacy with God and fullness of the Holy Spirit and hoping for chills to run up and down their spine in worship. And to others it means going deeper in our practice of the spiritual disciplines—more prayer, more reflection, more fasting. They want more spiritual experiences and soul care. Deeper knowledge. Deeper intimacy. Deeper practice. Real Christians are serious about these.

But John doesn't start with any of these. The first thing John says is, "You wanna go deeper? Then stop sinning." That's not exactly what we were hoping to hear, is it? At least not right away. There's nothing new and exciting about "not sinning." But that's where he begins. If you call yourself a Christian, John says, then start living like one.

So the first topic, or test, that John introduces is the ethical test: How do you live? Let's follow John's reasoning as he takes us deeper in our understanding of what it means to be a real Christian.

Read 1 John 1:5–7.

[Q] Why does John use "light" as a metaphor for God (v. 5), and what does that have to do with the way we live?

Note: John reminds his leaders that light isn't just about knowledge. It's about conduct. God isn't light because He's spiritual. He's light because He's holy, and His people should be to if they want to go deeper.

[Q] Look at verse 6: What does the phrase "do not live by the truth" mean?

Note: This could literally be translated, "do not do the truth." We think of truth as something we know. John tells us that truth is something we do. For example, of its true that wearing seatbelts save lives, it's not enough simply to know that truth; you have to do truth—you have to buckle your seatbelt. According to John, real Christians don't just believe their faith, they do their faith.

[Q] What does verse 7 tell us about what it means to walk in the light?

Teaching Point Two: Walk as Jesus walked.

Read 1 John 2:3–6.

Notice how John uses words like “know” and “truth”—words that we associate with going deeper—and turns them into behaviors. If you want to know if somebody’s a real Christian, John says, don’t just ask them what they believe, look at how they live. In fact, John says, if someone claims to be a Christian, but they don’t do what Christ says, they’re a liar. Liar? That’s pretty harsh! But that’s how serious John is about obeying God’s commands.

Unfortunately, a lot of contemporary Christians are not making that connection. A disturbing Barna poll compared the behavior of so-called “born-again Christians” with the rest of the population. These were people who said they had accepted Christ as their Savior and believed the Bible was God’s Word. That survey found that in a 30-day period, these self-identified Christians were nearly as likely as anyone else to visit a pornographic website, to take something that didn’t belong to them, to physically fight or abuse someone, to drink too much, to use an illegal drug, to have said something that wasn’t true, to have gotten back at someone for something they did, and to have said mean things behind someone’s back. Clearly there is a gap between the belief and behavior of many people who call themselves “Christians.”

[Q] Look at verse 6. What does it mean to walk as Jesus walked—how do we do that?

[Q] Let’s explore this idea further by brainstorming what it would mean to walk as Jesus walked in our different roles in life. What would it mean for:

- a truck driver
- a middle manager
- a parent
- a journalist
- a salesman

Teaching Point Three: Do what’s right.

Once again John leaves the subject of lifestyle, and then comes back to it again later with a vengeance! Let’s follow John as he drills down a third time and then try to pull it all together. Read 1 John 3:7–10.

John is drawing some pretty stark lines in this letter. You’re either in the light, or you’re in the dark. You’re either living the truth or living a lie. You’re either a child of God or a child of Satan.

And at least one of the tests, John says, is ethical; it’s how you live each day.

[Q] How does the fact that the one “who does what is right is righteous” (v. 7) fit in with the fact that we are saved by grace and not works (Eph. 2:8–9)?

[Q] John isn't saying that a real Christian never sins. He says he cannot go on sinning. Can you give an example of the difference?

Note: He's talking about habitual behavior, not occasional lapses. But he is expecting progress. As we go on with God, as we go deeper in our faith, it will show up not only in our belief, but also in our behavior. We won't just bask in His presence in morning devotions; we'll do the right thing at work that afternoon.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Have you crossed the line and come to believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? Are you moving upward on this ethical axis, becoming more like Christ every day? What steps might the Lord want you to take that will get you moving up toward the deep walk and abundant life God has in mind for you?

Action Point: On your own this week, think about the above questions and then talk to God about them. He desires to show you your heart and then to change it. Ask him sincerely to do so.