

# TEST 1: OBEYING GOD'S COMMANDS

## 1 JOHN 02:03–06

### *Introduction*

How do we know if we really know God? We live in a day when many people are not even interested in knowing God. They could care less about knowing God. They want to live like they want and get all the possessions and enjoy all the pleasures of the world they can. To know God is the furthest thing from their minds. But this is dangerous ground, for if God really exists then the rejecters of God are going to miss out:

=> They are going to miss out on the purpose, meaning, and significance of life; they are going to miss out on real love, joy, and peace and the abundance of a rich and full life both now and eternally. If God really exists and they fail to know Him, they are going to miss out on all of what life really is. Why? Because God created life and He knows what life should be. Therefore, if we do not know God, God who gave us life, then we miss out on everything that God meant life to be. But this is not all that the rejecters will face if they do not know God.

=> If God exists, then it means that all those who reject Him must face His holiness and justice. They must stand before Him having rejected Him and face His judgment.

The point is clear: we must know God. But how can we tell if we really know Him?

There are seven tests that will show us. The first test is the discussion of this passage: Do we obey God's commands?

- I. The test: do we obey God's commands (v. 3)?
- II. The professing man: says he knows God but does not obey His commands (v. 4).
- III. The obedient man: obeys God's Word (v. 5).
- IV. The responsible man: lives up to his profession (v. 6).

### **I. *John 02:03 Commandments and the Knowledge of God***

How do we know if we really know God? There is a test that will show us. Do we obey God's commands? Man faces an enormous problem, a problem that any thinking and honest person can see. If God really exists, man can never know it — not by his own reasoning and energy or effort. No matter how much thought or creative thinking and *inner feelings* man may have, man can never know for sure if God exists — not in and of himself. There is a clear reason for this. Man lives in a physical and material world, and the physical and material world cannot penetrate or cross over into the other world, that is, into the spiritual world. If man is ever to *know* the spiritual world, if he is ever to know God, then God has to enter the physical and material world and reveal Himself to man. And note: this is exactly what God has done. God has sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world to tell man the truth: the truth about God, about man himself, about the world in which man lives, and about the world to come. This is exactly what Jesus Christ and His followers said time and again. This is exactly what Jesus Christ and Scripture declare:

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⇒ No man has ever crossed over into the spirit world and returned, no man but Jesus Christ.

**John 3:13** *“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man.”*

**John 6:50-51** *“But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”*

**John 6:33, 38** *“For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”*

**John 8:42** *Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.”*

**John 13:3** *Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.*

**John 17:5** *“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”*

⇒ Jesus Christ came to save man from perishing and to give man a full, abundant life both now and eternally.

**John 3:16** *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

**John 3:36** *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.”*

**John 5:24** *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

**John 10:10** *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

⇒ Jesus Christ said that God had sent Him to make God known.

**John 5:38** *“Nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.”*

**John 12:45** *“When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.”*

**John 6:29** *Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”*

**John 7:28** *Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him.”*

**John 8:26** *“I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”*

**John 14:7** *“If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”*

**John 16:15** *“All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.”*

**Col 2:9** *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.*

**1 Tim 3:16** *Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.*

**Heb 1:3** *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

This means something very significant: if we are to know God, we must know Jesus Christ. God has revealed Himself and made Himself known through Jesus Christ and through Christ alone. Therefore, to know God we must know Jesus Christ whom He has sent. How do we know if we know God? If we know Jesus Christ, then we know God.

Now, note exactly what the verse says.

*We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. (v. 3)*

This verse says explicitly that we know God if we obey God's commands. What are God's commands?

**1 John 3:23** *And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.*

God's chief command is this: that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another. There are two things said here.

1. First, to know God we must believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ. If we believe in Christ, then we come to know God, for Jesus Christ came to earth to reveal God. By believing in Jesus Christ we keep God's commandment.
2. Second, to know God we must love one another. Love covers all the commandments of God. If we love one another, we will not hurt or cause pain for one another; we will not offend or sin against one another. We will be obeying all the commands of God. This is exactly what Scripture declares.

**Rom 13:8-10** *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.*

The point is this: How do we know if we know God? Take a test: Do we obey God's commands? If we obey God's commands, then we believe in Jesus Christ, that He is God's Son, and we love one another. We surrender all we are and have to Jesus Christ and to loving one another. Unless we are doing these two things, we do not know God. No matter what a person may say, he does not know God if he has never given his life to Jesus Christ. And he does not know God if he criticizes, grumbles and backbites his brother and commits adultery, kills, steals, lies, covets or does anything else against his brother. If a person really knows God, then he wants to please God. He wants to know more and more about God, and the only way he can know more and more about God is to follow God. He has to do the things that God does, to walk and love as God walks and loves. The more we walk and love as God does, the more we will come to know God. Therefore, if we obey His commands, we know Him. This is the way we can tell if we know Him, the only way.

**John 7:16-17** *Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own."*

**John 8:31** *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples."*

**John 8:51** *"I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."*

**1 John 2:3** *We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.*

**Hosea 6:3** *"Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth."*

**Thought 1.** Some people seek to know God. They seek after God, but they do it in the wrong way.

- 1) Some speculate about God. This is the route most people take in trying to know God. They imagine what God is like and hold that image in their mind and try to live by what they imagine. They have their own teachings and their own images of what God is like, and they govern their lives by that image.
- 2) Some try to seek and know God by mystical or emotional experiences. They seek to know the spiritual world and its focus through spiritists, astrology, seances, magic and a host of other man-made mystical experiences.

## **II. John 02:04 False Profession**

There is the man who makes a false profession. Scripture is direct and pulls no punches:

*The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (v. 4)*

It is absolutely impossible to know God and not to obey His commands. Why? For one clear reason: if God really exists, then He created us. We came from God. He created us for some purpose; He put us on earth for some reason. Therefore, He is bound to tell us why He created us; He is bound to tell us what He wants us to do and exactly how to do it. He would defeat His purpose if He did not. Therefore, God would never leave us in the dark, groping and grasping and trying to find out the truth. He would be a God of hate if He left us in the dark, and He is the farthest thing from hate. Jesus Christ has shown us that God is love, that God loves us so much that He has given us the Holy Scriptures to tell us what to do. But more than this, God has shown us His love by giving His Son to live the truth out right before our eyes. God has not only given us His written Word that tells us how to live, He has given us the *Living Word* in the life of His Son. God has sent His very own Son to live the perfect and ideal life upon earth so that we might know how to live. Jesus Christ lived out the will of God; He lived just like God commands man to live. Therefore, He knew God perfectly. He had perfect communion and fellowship with God.

The point is this: if a person says that he knows God and does not obey God's commands, he is a liar. The only way a person can know God is to follow Jesus Christ, to walk in fellowship with God just like Jesus Christ did. A person has to follow the perfect and ideal life of Jesus Christ. The person has to walk and live as Jesus Christ walked and lived: he has to follow Jesus Christ and do exactly what Jesus Christ says in order to know God. This is what Jesus Christ did: He obeyed all the commands of God; therefore, He knew God perfectly. This is exactly what man must do. Man must follow Jesus Christ and do exactly what Christ did: obey the commands of God. When man obeys the commands of God, then he will come to know God.

But note: the converse is also true. If a man does not obey God's commands, then he does not know God. This is exactly what this verse says. Note it again.

*The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (v. 4)*

Note: this person makes a false profession. His knowledge of God — what he thinks God is like — is false. His image of God and the ideas within his mind of God are not true. They are false, counterfeit, not genuine. The person does not know God at all. How can we tell? Because he does not obey the commands of God. He has not truly believed in Jesus Christ, nor is he loving his brother like God commands. He is not walking like Jesus Christ walked, not obeying God nor doing what God says to do. The verse is clear; note it: the person is a liar and the truth is not in him. He is making a false profession.

*Mat 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."*

*Mark 7:6 He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.'"*

**John 13:35** “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

**Titus 1:16** They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

**Eph 5:1-6** Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

**Ezek 33:31-32** My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.

**Psa 78:35-36** They remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer. But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues.

### **III. John 02:05 True Profession and Obedience**

There is the obedient man. The obedient man obeys God's Word and knows God and loves God. Note how obedience is tied to knowing and loving God. All these things are involved in knowing anyone. The only way to know anyone is...

- to get near them.
- to study them, learn all about them — all about their will, desires, and wants, their nature and thoughts and behaviour.

The same is true with God. The only way to know God is to get near Him and study Him, learning all we can about His will, desires and wants; all about His nature and thoughts and behaviour. But how can we do this when God is in the spiritual world, another whole dimension of being, a world that is far removed from this world? By Jesus Christ. Remember: Jesus Christ came to earth to reveal God and to show us how to draw near God. Therefore, to know God, we must draw near Jesus Christ and follow the example He left us. We must follow the Word of Christ; we must keep the Word of Christ, living exactly as He lived. This is the person who knows God.

Note a most wonderful result: the person who obeys God's Word has God's love made complete in his life. What does this mean? When we draw near God and begin to obey

His Word, we begin *to establish a relationship* with God. It is just like a boy who meets a girl and begins to draw near her. He begins to know her and to develop affection for her, and the more he associates with her, the more he loves her. So it is with God. The more we draw near Him and obey His Word and please Him, the more we learn about Him and love Him. The word “obeys” (terei) is continuous action. It means to continue on and not to stop. It means day by day obedience. If we obey God's Word day by day, then we learn more and more about God; we learn to love Him more and more. His love becomes completed and fulfilled in us.

The obedient person is the person who knows God and loves God. He is the person who knows the love of God; he knows all the fullness of life that God's love brings. No matter what a person may profess — no matter how religious a person may be — if he does not obey God, he does not know God. Neither does he love God.

*Mat 7:25-27* “The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

*Mat 12:50* “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

*John 7:17* “If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”

*John 14:23* Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

*John 15:14* “You are my friends if you do what I command.”

*John 14:31* But the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. “Come now; let us leave [that I may die].”

*John 15:10* “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.”

*Rev 22:14* “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”

*Deu 5:29* Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

#### **IV. John 02:06 True Believer Lives up to his Profession**

There is the responsible man, the man who lives up to his profession. The word “walk” (peripatein) is continuous action. It means to keep on walking: to continuously walk. If a person says that he abides in Christ, he must be a responsible person. He ought to walk as Jesus Christ walked. In fact, the word *must* means debt, constraint, obligation. The person

who professes Jesus Christ, who claims that he knows God, is obligated to walk as Jesus Christ walked. He is in debt to walk as Christ walked. How did Christ walk upon earth? He walked...

- believing and trusting God
- worshipping and praying to God
- fellowshiping and communing with God
- giving and sacrificing all He was and had to God
- seeking and following after God
- teaching and telling others about God
- loving and caring for others just as God said to do
- obeying all of God's commands

This is the responsible man, the man who lives what he professes. If he professes to know God, he walks even as the Lord Jesus Christ walked upon earth. He believes and trusts God; he worships and prays to God, and he does all the other things that Christ did. He walks in the footsteps of Christ, doing exactly what Christ did. This is the person who knows God.

***Rom 6:4** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

***2 Cor 5:7** We live by faith, not by sight.*

***Gal 5:16** So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

***Eph 4:1** As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*

***Eph 5:2** And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

***Eph 5:15** Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise.*

***1 John 1:7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

***1 John 2:6** Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*

***Mat 16:24** Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*

***John 13:15** "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."*

***Phil 2:5** Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

***Col 3:13** Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*



**Heb 3:1-2** *Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.*

**1 Pet 2:21** *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ■*