

**King James Bible Study Correspondence Course**

*An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries*  
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

**1 John Lesson 4**

1 John 2: 3-11

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Genuine Christians obey God's Word and love God's people.

What people think is true is not necessarily what is true. For centuries most people thought that the earth was flat and that it was the center of the universe. Now, however, we realize that the earth's a sphere and that it is a small planet far from the center of the universe.

When questioned in surveys, a high percentage of people in North America claim to be Christians. In fact, over 30 percent of Americans say that they are born again. At the same time, there seems to be little Christian influence in our society, and genuine Christians seem to be an extremely small minority.

As John wrote his first letter, he addressed a question that is important for people today. He gave several standards by which to measure whether a person is a genuine Christian. Just as his original readers needed to know who was a Christian and who was not, so today we need to be able to know whether a person's claim to be a Christian is valid.

In I John 2:3-11 John focused on the standards of obedience and love. Real Christians, he declared, evidence a pattern of obedience to God's commandments. In addition, real Christians demonstrate love for other Christians. With so many people claiming to be Christians, these are two ways to separate the genuine from the false. If a person truly knows God, his life will demonstrate obedience and love.

**Telling the Genuine from the Counterfeit**

Bank tellers become skilled at picking out counterfeit bills. Each day as they work with currency, they learn what genuine bills look like. When a counterfeit bill shows up, they can usually recognize it right away.

John wanted his readers to be able to tell the difference between genuine and counterfeit Christians. To help them do that, he gave several distinguishing marks of true Christians. In addition, he contrasted these marks with the false claims of counterfeit believers. John did this to reassure true Christians that they know God and to reveal phony Christians for who they are.

Human beings naturally want to decide for themselves how to live. Throughout all of human history people have rebelled against God's rules. Only those who truly know God have the desire to obey Him. The person who consistently obeys God's Word demonstrates that he or she has a genuine relationship with God. As John mentioned in chapter 1, all Christians still

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disobey God at times; and, therefore, they need His forgiveness and cleansing. Nevertheless, those whose lifestyle is characterized by obedience reveal that they know and honor God. A

### Picture of Contrasts

In verses 4 and 5, John used two contrasting examples to illustrate what he meant by the mark of obedience. Verse 4 is a negative picture. Here John pointed to a person who claims to know God. At the same time, however, his life is moving in a different direction. The characteristic pattern of his life is disobedience to God's Word. John concluded that this person is a liar and that the truth is not in him.

Changed belief should produce changed behavior. When a person truly comes to know God, he submits his life to God's control. When a person is not living under God's control, his lifestyle calls into question whether he was truly saved.

Verse 5 looks at the positive side of the issue. In this picture is a person who consistently keeps God's Word. This person does not have sinless perfection, but he demonstrates a regular pattern of obedience to God. When a person is genuinely saved, God's Holy Spirit comes into his life. The Holy Spirit works from the inside out to change the Christian. He works to remove disobedience and to develop obedience in his or her life.

Galatians 5:22 and 23 list some of the fruit that the Holy Spirit works to produce.

John explained that the obedient Christian is being perfected in love (1 John 2:5). In other words, the genuine Christian lives in submission to God. As he surrenders to God's Spirit, he obeys God's Word. This obedience in turn produces spiritual qualities, including the ability to love, as God desires. John later described how love is the second mark of the real Christian.

In the meantime, John told his readers that if they wanted to know that they were in God, they needed to examine their lives. If they could see the evidence of consistent obedience to His Word, then they could be confident that they truly knew Him. If they lacked evidence of obedience, then their claim to know God could well have been false.

### A Better Standard

Go into any fast-food restaurant in America, and you'll find toys from the latest children's movie or most popular TV cartoon. Walk into a department store, and you'll see those same characters decorating children's clothing from sleepwear to swimwear. And then go to a playground; there you will hear children imitating the words and actions of their favorite characters. The kids want to be like, no, they want to be those characters.

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As children grow into teens, peers often become all important. In wanting to fit in and to be accepted by others, many teenagers simply follow their friends in their choices of clothes, music, and entertainment. This pattern does not end with the teenage years. Many adults are heavily influenced by what they see others doing. Advertising is such a big business because it is so tempting for people to focus on keeping up with the joneses.

John gave us a better pattern for our lives. The person we should imitate, who should be the most important in our lives, is Jesus Christ. Instead of living by our own desires or conforming to what others do, we should walk as He walked. In other words, we should act as He acted, serve as He served, and love as He loved.

When Jesus Christ came to earth, He was God's perfect object lesson of obedience. In the Bible we read of how He obeyed the will of the Father. We see Him reaching out to love all kinds of people. We witness His sacrifice for sinners on the cross.

The term "Christian" means literally "Christ likeness" If we bear the name of Christ, our lives should reflect the standard of Christ. If we do not live and love like Christ, then our profession may well be empty. Our standard for life reveals our standing with God.

### **An Old but New Commandment**

As we have seen, genuine Christians not only display a pattern of obedience to God's Word, but they also are characterized by love for one another. In I John 2:7-11 the apostle developed the idea of the second mark, that is, love. John was convinced that his readers were truly Christians, so he called them "brethren" (v. 7). Perhaps the false teachers had sown seeds of doubt in their minds, but John was confident that his readers bore the marks of genuine Christianity in their lives.

The false teachers had introduced new doctrines and demands. John, however, stated that what he taught was not a new story, but the old, old story (v. 7). He had not invented a new message but was insisting on the gospel truth. This message was what Jesus had taught to His disciples, and it was what the readers had known from the beginning of their knowledge of Christ (v. 7).

The kind of love that Christ commanded is foreign to the self-centeredness that dominates those who do not know God. Love like this belongs to God's realm of light. As light, God's love shines in the world and dispels the darkness of sin (I John 2:9-11).

By reinforcing Christ's commandment to love one another, John reaffirmed the new quality of life that Christ produces in His people. In our world, people are starved for real love. Counterfeit loves abound, but they do

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not satisfy. By loving one another, Christians reveal their own knowledge of God, and they point the world to Christ, Who is the source of all true love.

### **A Tale of Two Brothers**

In verses 9-11 John used two examples to contrast those who have the mark of love and those who do not manifest Christian love. First he referred to a person who claims to be in the light, or in the realm of God. This person says that he is doing what is pleasing to God, but his life reveals something quite different. Instead of obeying Christ's commandment to love one another, he hates his brother (v. 9).

When we hear of hatred, we immediately think of active hostility against someone. That certainly is one form of hatred, but there are other ways in which we refuse to love others. Hatred is the absence of love, so it includes ignoring others in need or being indifferent to those around us. The passive expression of hatred is just as much disobedience to Christ's commandment as is active opposition to others.

John also looked at the positive example of one who obeys Christ's commandment by loving his brother (I John 2:10). This person abides in the light. By obeying what God says and by valuing what God values, he or she chooses to put God's directions ahead of his or her own desires. By staying in the light, this believer avoids the pitfalls of sin that could make him or her stumble.

### **Walking into Walls**

If you have ever been caught in an unfamiliar building when the electricity goes off, you know how darkness can be confusing. When you cannot see where you are going, you will likely become disoriented and start bumping into things.

Sin has the same effect on lives. John stated that the person who hates his brother is in spiritual darkness (v. 11). Instead of walking in the light, as the loving Christian does, he walks in the darkness. The loving Christian does not have to fear stumbling, but spiritual darkness inevitably leads into danger.

The person who will not obey God finds that sin blinds his eyes. Because he is unwilling to walk on God's path, he is unable to see the path. Sin corrupts the mind so that a person cannot know where he is going. Sin distorts the perception so that the person cannot see which way to turn.

People often refuse to submit to God's commandments because they say that they want to be free. The spiritual darkness, however, leads to bondage and pain. Only in Christ is true love, life, and liberty.

### Notes

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### 1 John Lesson 4

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the two ways to separate the genuine from the false Christians?
2. According to I John 2:3, what is the first mark of the genuine Christian?
3. What are the two contrasting examples to illustrate what he meant by the mark of obedience?
4. What is the first aspect of the fruit of the spirit?
5. Who should we imitate in our Christian lives and the three ways how
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
6. By what standard are you living today?
7. Are you living according to your own pleasures?
8. Are you doing what everyone else is doing?
9. Are you living by the standard of Christ?
10. What is the second mark of a Christian?
11. Although John taught the old message, why would it be correct to call John's teaching "a new commandment" (I John 2:8)? See John 13:34.
12. In the tale of the two brothers, what was hate?
13. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25- 37), who showed passive hatred for the injured man, and who showed love?

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14. Compare walking in physical darkness to walking in spiritual darkness?
  
15. What do people in our society associate with the term "born-again Christian"?
  
16. What are the first things that people notice when they look at our lives?
  
17. What can we do in order to love those who are un-loveable?
  
18. What is the key verse in this lesson?



Scripture Memorization, write out these verses on the back of this page: I John 2: 3, I John 2:6; Ephesians 5:1,2; Ephesians 5:13, 14.

Christianity is more than talk; it is a Christ-like walk, we learn how to live by discerning how Christ lived, how we live reveal whether we abide in Christ.

This week take some time to evaluate the quality of your obedience and love.

Then ask God to help you to overcome in your weak areas.