



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Summer 2018 Leader Commentary

Unit 2: No Doubt About It
Session 1: Am I a Christian? (see pp. 120-123)

The Question: How can I know I'm a Christian?

The Point: You may know that you have eternal life.

Background Passage: 1 John 4–5

Focal Passage: 1 John 4:2-8, 13-15

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, “How can I know I’m a Christian?” and drive home this one truth: You may know that you have eternal life.

Focus on These Points

Confess Jesus Is the Son of God
(1 John 4:2-3, 15)

John’s first letter addresses a setting in which some people in the local church had departed the fellowship (2:19). John wrote in part to stabilize the situation. He reaffirmed and enlarged on key theological truths, particularly the doctrine of Christ. A personal relationship with Christ is the foundation of the Christian life, and out from this grows obedience to divine commands.

In the beginning of the book, John provides the reason that he wrote it—so his readers would enjoy the fellowship with God that is possible only to those who have seen Him. This fellowship rests on the reality of Jesus Christ’s incarnation and results in full joy for those who experience it (1:1-4).

John went on to say that no one who denies that Jesus “has come in the flesh” (1 John 4:2) should be believed. Denying that Jesus is the Son of God who became man reveals that the one who makes this denial is not a Christian. Such a person is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit and is in fact led by the “spirit of the antichrist” (v. 3). John then assured his readers that the Holy Spirit would enable them to see through the deception of false teachers. God’s Spirit does not condone false doctrine. By the end of the first century, a view of Christ arose that denied his true humanity. In this view, the Son of God assumed human form for a time, but the divine Christ departed from the earthly Jesus before the crucifixion. John insisted that Christ had come in the flesh. God was truly and fully incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. In verse 3, the words “spirit that does not confess Jesus” show that John was aware of people speaking by the power of spirits other than the Holy Spirit.

Christians today also must be vigilant in recognizing false teachers and the messages they proclaim.

The Greek verb translated *confesses* (v. 15) means “to agree with.” A relationship with God begins with the confession that “Jesus is the Son of God.” The title “Son of God” identifies Jesus as the Messiah. The designation declares Jesus’ uniqueness as One who is fully human and fully divine.

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Recognize Truth (1 John 4:4-6)

Warnings might make us question if we have listened to false teachers and become an antichrist. No! You have overcome the antichrists, for you have successfully resisted the lure of the false prophets. The One who is in you (the Holy Spirit; Rom. 8:9) is greater than the one who is in the world (Satan; 1 John 5:19), who is called “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31).

The antichrists and false prophets are cut out of the same piece of cloth as the world. They are from the world, but we are from God. So, when the apostles (and possibly other true witnesses) speak from God, those who are born of God listen to them. The world does not listen to the things of God. The person without the Spirit “does not receive what comes from God’s Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually” (1 Cor. 2:14). The ministry of the Holy Spirit lets us discern the spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood. Therefore, prayer, meditation, and spiritual sensitivity are the primary factors that protect us from being deceived by false doctrine—not raw intelligence or academic learning.

Love God and Others (1 John 4:7-8)

Words based on the Greek root translated *love (agape)* occur frequently in verses 7-21. Jesus drew a distinction between natural love that the unsaved demonstrate and God’s love believers share. In Matthew 5:46-47, Jesus pointed out that people easily show love to those who show love to them. But He also commanded His disciples to love even their enemies in imitation of their heavenly Father’s love (Matt. 5:44).

To know God (v. 8) does not mean merely to know about God. John used the verb “know” to describe an intimate relationship with God. This relationship can occur only through faith in Jesus Christ.

Guided by His Spirit (1 John 4:13-14)

The source of the believer’s love, John said, is God’s Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives life to the believer and begins a process of conforming the believer to Christlikeness. The first characteristic of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, according to Paul, is love (Gal. 5:22).

Remaining in God refers to walking faithfully with God. John’s point that “we remain in Him and He in us” (v. 13) is the equivalent of being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). When the Holy Spirit fills our lives, we act in love as Christ loved. The opposite of remaining in God is resisting the Holy Spirit, which the Bible refers to as grieving and stifling the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). John explained in the previous verses that the invisible God is revealed through Christian believers as they act in love. In verse 14, he noted that God’s love in believers gives testimony that “the Father has sent his Son as the world’s Savior.” God’s love was revealed in the sending of Jesus.

The powerful effect of the gospel is a believer showing love to others. John said that love in the Christian displays God and His love to a lost world.