

The Summer of Love Week 3: Knowing God

This is the Summer of Love 2023! There's more to it. It's the summer of love, but also **unity and fellowship**. Why? This isn't **1969**, the actual summer of love. That summer, young people were looking for love, purpose, and truth and they weren't finding it in the culture.

The Summer of love, 2023, is about hearing God's voice about love for God and one another. Loving one another will **create unity and true fellowship** in the church. We find all of this in **three short letters which were written by John, the Apostle**. John was in Jesus' **inner circle**. He walked around Palestine, watching everything Jesus did and listening to everything he said.

Our theme verse for this series is 1 John 1:7, that captures the idea of **light** that Jesus brings and how we can have fellowship with one another. I encourage you to memorize this verse. **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 cleanses us from all sin.** **1 John 1:7 Walking in the light is the challenge for the summer of love.**

The best way to dive into this series and hear God's voice is to pick up a free journal in the lobby, or if you are watching online, simply call, stop by the office, or you can buy your own through **CrossWay Publishing**. Also pick up a **study guide** that will help you dig a little deeper and hear a little clearer. There is a **video attached to our erchog.org** website where a very aging, yet handsome, man takes you through how to get the most from this series.

We pick back up in 1 John 2:3 and read through verse 11. Look for any of our key words **Love, abide, light, and fellowship**. **³ And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.** You may notice **another key word** repeated. **Circle or mark the word "know"** in this section.

⁷ Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. ⁸ At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you,

which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. ⁹ Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰ Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 1 John 2:3-11 ESV

Who is John speaking to? There are two groups of people within the churches that he has planted in Western Turkey that he wants to speak to. There are the **people who are causing conflict and spreading untruth**, and there are **those whom John thinks will be misled by them**.

These churches are in **danger of imploding** with nothing left but a smoldering hole in the ground. The first group, who can best be described as those who follow a **philosophy prominent at that time, Gnosticism**. Gnosis is the Greek word for knowledge. These people **fancied themselves as smart and highly evolved**. They believed that there was this special **"spiritual" knowledge** that they had received. The catch is that they **separate the spiritual from the physical**. One has nothing to do with the other and the **spiritual is a much higher level of consciousness** than the physical. For that reason, they believe **how they lived and what they did with their bodies** and lives in the physical world **had nothing to do with them knowing or being connected to God**. In other words, sin was a non-issue. It wasn't that they were **soft on sin**, **the whole subject was irrelevant**.

This clearly flies in the face of what Jesus taught, which is what **John saw and heard firsthand**, and has given to these churches via his teaching and the **gospel that he wrote earlier**. They are literally teaching a **different gospel** from what they first heard from John. Which included the reality that **Jesus' death on the cross provided forgiveness**.

If there is no sin, then there is no sin debt to be paid, and, therefore, no sacrifice needed, which means the **whole mission of Jesus was pointless** because sin doesn't exist. Therefore, it doesn't separate us from God. **We just need special spiritual knowledge**.

They didn't even believe that **Jesus was God in a human body**, because the spiritual and the physical cannot mix. They would say that Jesus **"appeared to be human."**

These same people are saying that they know God. The Gnostics know God through the special spiritual knowledge that they know God. They would also say that they love God.

Today most people would say they know God. The key word that is used now is, "Well, I believe in God." That is the way of saying yes, there is a God, and I know enough of him to say that I know him.

They can recite what they think. It's intellectual agreement. This is clearly not what John is talking about in these verses.

What does it mean to know God? Know in this sense is not "know about."

You know what it means to "name drop," don't you? That is when someone conveniently fits in the name of any famous person they know in order to make themselves look well connected or like a big deal.

This is Bill Greiner name dropping. "Speaking of God, I remember the time I was living in Dunn Hall on the Campus of Anderson College. And Steven Curtis Chapman, we just called him Steve back in the day, walked into my room. And he said, "Hey did any of you guys accidently pick up my shampoo out of the shower room?"

Or Speaking of Steven Curtis Chapman, multi Grammy and dove award winning Christian artist. I remember back before she married Steven Curtis Chapman, Beth was hanging out in the youth group at Hillside Ave Church of God in Springfield, Ohio. I walked over and said, "Hey Mary Beth (that's what we called her before she married multi-Grammy and Dove award winner Steven Curtis Chapman) are you going to the lockin this weekend?"

That is shameless name dropping by Bill Greiner. Now you undoubtedly think I'm more awesome than you did five minutes ago.

But what if I said, I know Jane Wiedlan, the guitar player for the Go Go's. I stood up here and told you about all of their different albums and things I know about her life from being a fan of her music. And yes, I did stand face to face with her in a party store in Malibu, California. How would you respond to my name-dropping Jane Wiedlin as someone I know?

I don't "know" Jane Wiedlin, because I can tell you a lot about her from watching and listening to what she did in the public eye.

That's like playing one of those video games where you are running through the woods in World War II, fighting against the Nazi forces, and then saying I know what it was like to fight in the Battle of the Bulge.

And yet, that's what they were saying about Jesus even though they were preaching something diametrically opposed to the message and the Kingdom Jesus came to proclaim. And they believe that he only appeared to be human, but wasn't. The one who was the promised Messiah, Christ the King, God in a human body. How can that make any sense?

Let's read verses 3-5 again. ³ **And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. 1 John 2:3-5a**

Back to our original question that John is answering, "What does it mean to know God? Anyone who really knows God understands that...Obey means love.

The famous book 5 Love Languages, by Gary Chapman, was so helpful at describing how depending on how we are wired, we receive or experience love in different ways. Some people receive love through gifts. That is what tells them that you love them. Other acts of service are what tell them that you love them. And still other people it is through spending quality time with them that they know that you love them. Then there's physical touch and words of affirmation.

Do you know what God's love language is? Its obedience. It's following his son, Jesus. and what we know to be true about him from the Bible. That's how we demonstrate that we really do know him and love him. It's not how many facts we know or verses we can quote, or how many times we've been to church.

If I obey him or follow his direction, then I love him. If I love him, I will obey him and follow his direction.

Here's what John wrote in his gospel. **"If you love me, obey my commandments. John 14:15**

Jesus replied, **"All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. ²⁴ Anyone who doesn't love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me. John 14:23a-24**

When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. John 15:10

Maybe obey sounds demeaning to you and you just struggle with that word, giving you a picture not of love, but of domination. Maybe there are things from your past that make that difficult to hear. If that is the case then use this phrase, "Align your life" to the life of Jesus.

Jesus is saying that's the way he proved his love for the father, by obeying him even to the point of going to a cross to suffer unimaginably and ultimately die. Jesus probably won't ask us to physically die for him, but he does ask us to give him our complete allegiance, regardless of the circumstances. That is what he meant by losing your life to gain your life.

To love him is to **"keep"** his commands. You might say, **"Well I've kept the sabbath, one of the 10 commandments, by coming to church today. In other words, you kept or observed the sabbath. And while here you didn't murder anyone, so you observed another command. Does that mean you kept his commands and, therefore, demonstrated love for Jesus?"**

Keep... means more than observe. Keeping the sabbath means more than just to observe it. This word keep, "implies duration and perseverance: to observe diligently, to guard carefully, to suddenly realize a truth—and to protect it."

That's when someone meets Jesus, and they know that life as it was, is now over and they belong to him. Now they do what his word says, not begrudgingly or to check it off as proof of being a good Christian, but because it pleases the one who rescued them from death to life.

But wait, there is more about this, obey means love. **If we do not obey Jesus** "The truth is not in him." (v4) What does that mean? I don't have the truth in me. **Does that mean I will do nothing but lie.** If that is the case, then it doesn't apply to me.

Do you know who was described as the truth? Jesus told him, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life.** No one can come to the Father except through me. John 14:6 NLT

The Holy Spirit... "the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. John 14:7 NIV

The Word...Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. John 17:7 NLT

To not obey what Jesus commands, means the truth, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the word or not in him. In other words, if I don't obey, I don't really know him and I don't really love him.

Let's go back to our original passage and pick back up with the last half of verse 5. When I read this and I get to one of our key words in the study guide, you are to start making the sound of a bell, **ding, ding, ding.** **By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. 1 John 2:5b-6**

To really know God is that we **obey him** as proof of our love. To know God also means I must...**Work to rest.**

What in the world does that mean? You can't work to rest, those are opposites. **But haven't you worked really hard to get everything done for a vacation, or trip, so that you could completely dive into the experience without anything hanging over your head. That's working to rest. I would argue that if we don't put some effort in it, we won't ever rest in this culture.**

That's what the word, "abide" means. **I must make a concerted effort to remain connected, aware of or in tune with Jesus.** A person cannot do that in a world that wants us to focus on what they want to convince us of or sell us.

Here's the way John said it in his gospel, which these people have already heard. You've probably heard this before if you have been in church for a while. This is pound for pound one of the most powerful scriptures for helping us live in this culture. ⁴ **Remain** (same as abide) **in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.** ⁵ **"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For **apart from** (the opposite of abide or remain) **me you can do nothing.**** ⁶ **Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. John 15:4-6**

How do I abide or remain with him? Now keep in mind this is **not you working to get closer to Jesus.** If you are a Christ follower and have put your trust in him, then he's in you and, therefore, by definition cannot get any closer. **This is not trying to get his attention and gain his approval.** You already have his attention and approval. **You are his adopted child and heir to a king.**

This is where we properly see spiritual disciplines or practices. These are our work, our effort to rest or abide or remain in Jesus. It's how we are **paddling down a river** full of rapids and we slide in behind a big rock where the water is quiet and we just set and rest so that we can handle the rapids effectively when we re enter the fray.

It's how we create capacity within our hearts and our minds for the transforming power of Jesus.

What if you viewed your efforts this summer to read and dig into what John is saying as working to rest? That will take some effort and some time. But that is working to rest.

What if you decided I'm going to make the effort to be here each Sunday this summer to experience this live and to do it with these other people, my brothers and sisters. That will take some effort. **It's Saturday night and you aren't on vacation, but you check the weather** for Sunday morning to see if it's raining or sunny. Raining means I go to church and sunny means I can get **18 holes** in and still have the rest of the day. **Coming here, even though the sun is shining, is working to rest.**

What if you practice the spiritual discipline of silence? You committed to go somewhere **quiet with only your Bible and a journal**. You read something, meditate on it, and then just listen. You write down anything that you think the spirit might be whispering to you. **Apart from anything he might say to you your goal is just to be aware of his presence and how good he is. Just enjoy being with Jesus.** That is working to rest.

To know God is to understand that obeying or aligning my life to Jesus demonstrates that I love God. I can't truly know God if I don't obey him, because I love him. And knowing God means I'm going to **work to rest or abide in him.**

There's one more important thing about knowing God. And it is hiding in plain sight in verse 10. **Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, 1 John 2:10a**

Knowing God means that I acknowledge that...**"Love one another" is an absolute.** **This doesn't have a list of circumstances when we can opt out of loving one another.** And in this case, **he is talking about within the church.** Remember there are these troublemakers who don't believe there is a connection between what they do and their spiritual superior spiritual knowledge of God. **They don't think this is an absolute** for people who say they know God.

Here's the old but new command. So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ³⁵ **Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."** John 13:34-35

Don't let the last phrase slip by unnoticed. The proof is not **how religious we are or how pious we are or how much we know about the bible** that will have an impact on those on the outside looking in. **It's when this group of people who are so different and really shouldn't be able to work together, sacrifice for one another and truly love each other like a brother or sister would.** When everyone is **shouting at each other they aren't.** When everyone is trying to get somewhere they are **at peace together, enjoying what is it, what's the word for this...fellowship.** What everybody really wants, a **safe place to belong** where I can express the fact that I am loved by God by **loving my brothers and sisters, helping them live in these difficult times** as they do the same for me.

This is where I sacrifice part of what I want for you. This is where I don't use my freedom in a way that causes anyone to stumble. What if they saw us acting that way for our community instead of treating this fellowship as a consumer. "I'll come so that they can give me what I need to get through this life." I'll be with these people when I think I'll like the worship songs.

You can't love someone who you aren't spending some time with because you won't really know them. You can't truly love what you don't know. That's infatuation and infatuation is about me, it's selfish. If you just know about me or Kim or Bob Cline, then those persons will become a caricature of what you think you know about them. You don't know anything about what is important to them, what they value or any of their back story behind what got them into the chair beside you.

Friends, I will be responsible for either teaching the gospel and what Jesus has said and commanded. This is a tough verse, but we have to read it. And this isn't for them out there, it's for us. ²¹ "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²² On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' ²³ But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.' Matthew 7:21-23

A heart to do God's will, demonstrates that we know and love him, doesn't need to be perfect in performance. We are all broken and, as the children of Israel, prone to wander. Messing up, sinning, doesn't mean we will receive this judgment. This is for those who don't allow Jesus to be Lord and tell them how they should live but, in the end, call out Lord, Lord, with a list of good even religious deeds.

Stepping into the Light

- 1. Keep the unity at Eagle Ridge...use the notes in your bag and send a picture. Get your phone out and do it!**
- 2. Test 1 new spiritual practice.**

If you pick up this journal, you can practice. The most effective spiritual practice is reading and studying the bible. Maybe the extent of your time in the bible is listening to it read or talked about in a sermon. If you not only listen

to the sermons, but use them as a launch pad for your own reading, and study at home using the journal and study guide. **The data shows** that far too many professing Christians extent of being in the bible is **someone else talking about it at church**. Lifeway research shows that the bible as a way of transforming people's lives shows a huge jump when it is simply **read four days a week**.

This will not do if we want to be disciples who hear his voice and respond. **The Summer of Love demands more.** Look at the back of the study guide and the three questions. That is where bible reading and study meets hearing God's voice.

Maybe you want to start praying regularly. Sit quietly and listen for **five or ten minutes**, then journal your conversation with God and then ask him for what you need and what others around you need.

Maybe it's some regular times of **confession and repentance**.

Maybe you **practice generosity by beginning to tithe** as a way of life. Or you begin to give to the Warner Camp campaign.

Or a scary one, fasting, where you are reminded of your complete dependance upon God by taking a time away from eating or something else that dominates your time.

And don't forget to commit to your mission each time you leave the front door, by touching the banner that says, "As you go..."