

That You May Know the True God and Eternal Life

(1 John 5:13–21)

What is True & What to Do:

Christ-followers belong to the true God; He answers our prayers and gives us spiritual victory in Christ Jesus. Accept no substitute for salvation, reject false teachings and idols; know that your faith in Jesus grants you eternal membership in the family of God.

Background: ¹

John had at least three purposes for writing: 1) to counter false teaching and explain doctrines of the faith concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, 2) to encourage Christians in their salvation so that they may have an assurance that they belong to God and have eternal life, 3) to explain Christ's new commandment of love.

1.) So that you may have assurance and know the truth (v. 13–15)

- Confidence in Jesus as the Son of God, as the Messiah/Savior
- Confidence that you will have eternal life (that you're saved)
- Confidence before God (on judgment day, in prayer)
- Confidence God hears and answers prayer according to His will
- See also 1 John 2:28, 3:21,4:13-18

2.) So that you love others and offer intercessory prayer (v. 16–17)

- Known / visibly unrighteous behavior is a sin and should not be ignored or disregarded by a brother or sister in Christ
- Four common “views” of “sin leading to death” (not all are likely)
 1. (Unlikely) A heinous sin that is known to John's audience
 2. (Unlikely) Apostasy: only possible if John is speaking of someone who is not really a true believer in Jesus
 3. (Unlikely) Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (known also as the unpardonable sin).

4. Sin(s) done by a believer that leads to physical death as a result of God's discipline; God takes them out of this world prematurely by physical death (Acts 5, 1 Cor. 11:28-30).

- The 4th view (preferred) refers to willful sin that remains unconfessed and unrepented to the point that God takes drastic action, John instructs us not to focus on the specifics of the “sin that leads to death,” but rather on the “sin not leading to death.”
- God desires to forgive sins, and he desires intercessors to pray for Christians when they sin.
- John is not saying that some sin is worse than others. All sin is sin. V. 17, “All wrongdoing is sin.” Notice also that John says, “if anyone sees his brother,” not if anyone *hears*. Rumors don't count. The sin must be evident and confirmed.

3.) We know that Christians ... (v. 18, 20)

- Should not keep on habitually sinning (i.e., they seek to live right) because they have the Spirit of Christ/Holy Spirit to help them overcome sin and to give them spiritual discernment.
- Either belong to the family of the true God in His Son Jesus and have eternal life, or they are spiritual pretenders and really belong to Satan (see, 1 John 3:10); Believers have a spiritual origin in God; non-believers and the world fall under the power of Satan
- Are eternally secure in Christ. “If Satan cannot drag you to Hell, the next thing he wants to do to you is to mar your Christian testimony,”² but Romans 16:20 says God will soon crush Satan!

4.) Jesus is the real deal; tear down your idols (v.21, 1 Thess. 1:9)

- God made us in His image to reflect Him. If we do not commit ourselves to him, we will reflect something other than God in his creation. Idolatry destroys morality and mocks and disobeys God's word. Idolatry prostitutes God's worship. Ps. 115:4–8 reminds us that we conform to what we worship.

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 130.

² David L. Allen, *1–3 John: Fellowship in God's Family*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 242.

Application:

- ✓ Be forever assured of eternal life if you truly believe the Gospel
- ✓ Seek to repent and eliminate sin in your life. God will give life to those who commit sin not leading to death (v.16)
- ✓ Pray to God with confidence, but according to His will (not yours)
- ✓ “Many people think not “your will be done” but “your will be changed.” Jesus prayed, “your will be done.” Is that true of our lives today? Are we praying that God’s will be done? We can’t pray that way until we desire God’s will in our lives. We can’t desire God’s will in our lives until we are willing to do God’s will before we know what it is. I have to constantly ask myself, *Lord, is this what you want or what I want?*”³
- ✓ Do not get caught up in self-centered praying; determine that you are going to intentionally pray for others.
- ✓ Do not just ignore the visible sins of fellow believers. Pray for them and ask God to use you to help others overcome the sin in their lives and to be involved in a ministry of restoration for God’s glory (see Num 15:30; Heb 6:4–6; 10:26; Num 15:30; Heb 6:4–6; 10:26; also, 1 John 1:8-10).
- ✓ Remember what Samuel said to the people of Israel: “Far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you” (1 Samuel 12:23)
- ✓ Worship of idols leads to eternal death; worship of Jesus leads to eternal life.
- ✓ Only Jesus is “the true God and eternal life” (5:20). Failure to put him first is to fall prey to idolatry.
- ✓ Inspect your life; we are prone to make idols of almost everything, so be warned! Avoid the cults of self-care, self-help, self-image, and self-esteem that lead to an unhealthy focus on yourself.
- ✓ Self-image is important, but it must be defined biblically. No, you are not a little god, and no, loving yourself is not loving God.

- ✓ **Ask yourself: To which family do you belong? God or Satan?** 1 John 3:10 and 1 John 5:19 make it clear that “the whole world,” all living unbelievers, fall under the sway of the devil. The implication is that under the power of the devil, they are calmed to ‘sleep’ and are spiritually blind, dead, apathetic, and lost.

NOTES:

³ David L. Allen, *1–3 John: Fellowship in God’s Family*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 237.