

How to Know Your Salvation Is Real

A Study Guide on 1 John 2:3–6

Big Idea

You can go through all the right religious motions, hold correct doctrine, and still be deceived about the true condition of your soul. God does not want His people to live in uncertainty — assurance of salvation is meant to be a gift every genuine Christian possesses. 1 John gives us tests to examine ourselves honestly: is my faith real, or merely professed?

Key verse: *“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”* (1 John 5:13)

Opening Warning

Jesus warned that many will call Him “Lord” and even claim spiritual accomplishments, yet hear Him say “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:22–23). The Pharisees are the classic example: outwardly disciplined and religious, yet Jesus called them hypocrites who kept people *out* of the kingdom (Matthew 23:13).

Discussion: Why is it possible to attend church faithfully, keep religious habits, and still miss true salvation? What made the Pharisees’ religion empty?

Part 1: How to Know God (v. 3)

- Biblical “knowing” (Greek *ginōskō*) isn’t mere intellectual agreement — even demons believe correct facts about God (James 2:19).
- True knowing is relational and experiential — kinship, communion, ongoing relationship (John 17:3).

God reveals Himself in two ways:

1. **By revelation** — Through Scripture and supremely through Jesus Christ (John

20:31; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; John 1:18). Creation reveals God's existence but cannot save (Romans 1). Salvation comes only through the Gospel of Christ.

2. **By regeneration** — A spiritually dead person cannot perceive spiritual truth (1 Cor. 2:14). Just as Nicodemus needed to be “born again” (John 3:3), God must give spiritual life *before* a person can respond in faith. Regeneration precedes faith; life precedes communion.

Discussion:

- What's the difference between knowing facts *about* God and knowing God relationally?
 - Why can't creation alone save someone, even though it reveals God's existence?
 - How does the concept of regeneration change the way you think about “deciding” to become a Christian?
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Part 2: Evidence We Know God (vv. 3–6)

A truly regenerated heart cannot stay hidden — like a lamp on a stand, not under a basket (Luke 11:33). John confronts false teachers who claimed “I know Him” without any evidence to back the claim (v. 4).

Evidence #1: A Lifestyle of Obedience (vv. 3–4)

“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments... The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar.”

- “Keep” is present tense — an ongoing pattern, not a single decision or performance.
- Regeneration redirects our whole trajectory: from selfishness to righteousness (Ezekiel 36:27).
- Obedience is evidence of ownership (Romans 6:16) — not the *ground* of salvation, but its *fruit*.

Discussion: What's the difference between obedience that *proves* salvation and obedience that tries to *earn* it? What is the general “pattern” of your life — compromise or conviction?

Evidence #2: A Love for God (v. 5a)

“Whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God has been perfected.”

- Obedience flows from love, not the reverse (John 14:21).
- It’s possible to serve in a church for years without loving God — the Pharisees tithed meticulously but neglected “the love of God” (Luke 11:42–43).
- Genuine love makes obedience a delight, not a burden (1 John 5:3; Psalm 119:97, 92).

Discussion: Can you think of ways someone might do “Christian” things for reasons other than love for God? Do you experience obedience as delight or duty — and what would delight look like practically?

Evidence #3: A Christlike Walk (vv. 5b–6)

“The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”

- “Abide” (*menō*) implies an ongoing, living connection (cf. John 15:5).
- “Walk” (*peripateō*) is present tense — a consistent manner of life, not sinless perfection.
- Christ’s walk was marked by humility, obedience to the Father, dependence in prayer, and zeal for God’s house (Phil. 2:6–8; John 4:34; Mark 1:35; Luke 2:49).

Discussion: In what specific area of life is God calling you to imitate Christ more consistently right now? Where do you notice the biggest gap between your walk and His?

Summary Chart

Evidence	Verse	Marker
Obedience	2:3–4	Ongoing pattern of keeping His commands
Love	2:5a	Obedience as delight, not burden
Christlike walk	2:5b–6	Life increasingly resembles Jesus

Conclusion & Application

- If these evidences are absent, the call is to repent and believe the Gospel now — not to try harder religiously, but to call on Christ for new life.
- If these evidences are present in some measure (even imperfectly), the call is to praise God and ask Him to continue the work He began.
- "If there is no fruit it is because there is no root."

Closing verse to reflect on: 2 Corinthians 13:5 — *"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!"*

Personal Reflection Questions

1. Honestly, is my relational knowledge of God growing, or am I relying on facts and habits?
2. What evidence of new life can I point to in my own story — obedience, love, Christlikeness?
3. Where am I most tempted to substitute religious activity for genuine communion with God?
4. What is one concrete step of obedience I sense God calling me toward this week?