

Summary

In this sermon from 1 John 3, Pastor Chris explores what it means to be a genuine child of God versus a counterfeit Christian. Drawing on the analogy of bank tellers who recognize counterfeit money by handling the real thing constantly, he emphasizes that knowing God deeply is the best defense against spiritual deception. Rather than giving a checklist for spotting fake believers, John points us toward the marks of a true follower: a life shaped by obedience, righteousness, and love. The pastor outlines three foundational reasons for living an obedient life. First, the Father loves us and has called us His children, with the purpose of conforming us to the image of Jesus. Second, the Son redeemed us by exchanging his sinless life for our sinful one, which motivates us to choose obedience over sin. Third, the Holy Spirit lives in us, convicting us not primarily of sin but of righteousness, reminding us of who we truly are in Christ. The sermon closes with a call to self-examination: Are we truly born again? Are we walking in obedience? And are we loving others in deed and truth, which is the clearest evidence of genuine faith?

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today grateful for the gift of Your Word and the truth it brings into our lives. As we open our hearts to discuss what it means to truly follow You, we ask that You quiet our minds and soften any hardness in our hearts. Holy Spirit, we invite You to lead this conversation. Show each of us what You want us to personally receive today. May we leave this time not just informed, but transformed. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ice Breaker

If someone who knew you well had to describe you using one word, what word do you think they would choose, and why?

Key Verses

- 1 John 3:1
- 1 John 3:2-3
- 1 John 3:4-8
- 1 John 3:9-10

- John 3:3
- John 3:16
- 1 Corinthians 6:20
- 2 Corinthians 5:21
- John 13:35
- John 16:8

Questions

- Pastor Chris used the analogy of bank tellers who recognize counterfeit money by handling the real thing constantly. How does that idea apply to your own spiritual life? Are you spending enough time with the 'real thing' to recognize what is false?
- The sermon describes a counterfeit Christian as someone who practices continual, willful sin while justifying it and rejecting biblical truth. How does that definition challenge or clarify your own understanding of what it means to follow Jesus?
- The pastor shared that for the first 20 years of his faith, he was so focused on sin that he lived in shame and condemnation. Have you ever experienced that cycle? What helped you, or what do you think could help someone shift their focus toward righteousness instead?
- 1 John 3:2 (ESV) says, 'Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared.' What does it mean to you personally that you are already a child of God, even while still being shaped into the image of Jesus?
- The sermon highlights three reasons for living an obedient life: the Father loves us, the Son redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit lives in us. Which of these three truths feels most real and motivating to you right now, and why?
- 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV) says we 'become the righteousness of God' in Christ. How does understanding your identity as righteous in Christ change the way you approach your daily choices and struggles?
- John 13:35 (ESV) says, 'By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' In what practical ways does your love for other believers serve as evidence of your faith to those around you?
- The pastor closed by asking three questions: Am I truly born again? Am I allowing God to shape me into the image of Jesus? Am I being an honorable vessel for the Holy Spirit? Which of these three questions feels most pressing for you personally right now, and what would it look like to take a step forward in that area?

Life Application

This week, choose one practical way to turn your eyes toward Jesus rather than toward your failures or the failures of others. This could mean memorizing 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV) and repeating it when shame or condemnation creeps in, or it could mean intentionally showing love to a fellow believer through a specific act of service or encouragement. At the end of the week, reflect on how focusing on who you are in Christ changed the way you lived and loved.

Key Takeaways

- Knowing God genuinely is the best protection against spiritual deception. Just as bank tellers recognize counterfeit money by handling the real thing, we recognize false teaching and counterfeit faith by staying close to God and His Word.
- The Father's love is the first and foundational reason for living an obedient life. He has called us His children and His purpose is to conform us to the image of Jesus, both now and into eternity.
- Jesus redeemed us by exchanging His sinless life for our sinful one. Because we have been purchased at such a great price, we are motivated to choose obedience and glorify God in how we live.
- The Holy Spirit living in us is a powerful reason for obedience. He convicts believers not primarily of sin but of righteousness, reminding us that we no longer have permission to live as we once did because God's seed abides in us.
- The clearest outward evidence of genuine faith is love for other believers. A life of righteousness is not just about avoiding sin but about actively loving others in deed and in truth, not merely in words.

Ending Prayer

Lord, thank You for this time together and for the truth of Your Word that cuts through confusion and calls us back to what is real. Thank You that we are Your children, not because we earned it, but because You loved us and sent Your Son to redeem us. Holy Spirit, continue to do what only You can do. Convict us of righteousness. Remind us of who we are in Christ. And where we have been focused on our failures, help us to turn our eyes to Jesus. May the love we have for one another be the evidence the world sees that we truly belong to You. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus, amen.