



The Model For Authentic Obedience – 1 Jn. 2:3-6

(Expanded Sermon Notes)

Have you ever purchased one of those “**As Seen On TV**” products? They are usually the ones featured in the late-night infomercials. My grandma always seemed to be buying those. Honestly, it probably wasn’t all that often, but they seemed so neat as a kid, and gram was the only person I knew that actually would buy them. I would say that at least fifty percent of the time, she would get upset and throw the whole gadget out. And, if we are being really honest, maybe... maybe twenty-five percent of the time they actually worked. And, there is nothing worse than purchasing something that claims to do one thing and never lives up to the claim.

See, we don’t like products like that. We may laugh it off after we’ve moved on and realized we should never have purchased it in the first place. But when it comes to people, we have a raw relationship with people we find to be inauthentic, fake, or worse, deceptive. **We deeply value things and people that are authentic.**

We’ve all been here recently; we have heard someone say one thing and then act in a different way. With the amount of cultural and political critique and conversations going on, this is an inescapable reality. And, honestly, all of the “evaluating” we’re doing is exhausting. It wears us out emotionally, mentally, and even physically. It can lead to fractured relationships or just a general sense of distrust. **For those of us that claim to be Christians, we aren’t just misrepresenting ourselves or a political party; when we do this, we are tarnishing the name of Jesus.** And as Christians, we don’t want that to be true of us because we want Jesus to be glorified.

In our passage today, we are going to hear the words of John. He was writing to a group of Christians that were confused and honestly exhausted by feeling as if they weren’t living an authentic life with God. John is going to point them to the life and example of Jesus. Ultimately, we will see that an authentic relationship with God means that we are obedient to God’s commands. To claim that and then live otherwise is to lie to ourselves. It is like pretending to be something that we’re not, and the only person we’re fooling is ourselves. Everyone else can see through it. As we walk in obedience to God’s commands, God fills us with joy and a sense of complete contentment that leaves us feeling complete.”

Authentically knowing God will be demonstrated through obedience to God’s commands, in which Jesus is the ultimate model.

Believers gain confidence through obedience. (v. 3,5)

Confidence is an important thing. It is a stabilizing force that helps us not to be blown left or right when things get turbulent. And, authenticity is a key ingredient in confidence. As we saw last week, one of John's main purposes in writing this letter is to help a group of believers that were being blown left and right by new teachers to have confidence in their faith in Christ. As John opened his letter, he made it clear that the first step in the process of gaining confidence is to revisit what we believe about who Jesus is. Specifically, that he is divine and authoritative one from the beginning, and because we have seen, heard, and touched him, we can have confidence in who he is and what he taught us.

Now, John is going to propose a test for this group of believers, a moral test that they can look to and see if they are truly following the way of Jesus. What is this test? The test of obedience. John tells them that they can gain confidence through their obedience. He is going to use amplification in this passage to repeat the concept and draw very clear and vivid pictures for us to see the stark contrast between obedience (authenticity) and disobedience (inauthenticity). Again, his main idea is that we can have confidence in our faith (we can **know**) when our lives demonstrate it through obedience. Even Jesus said that if we love him, we will keep his commands. Our obedience is not a condition that wins God's love and favor; instead, it is a sign that the love and joy of Christ are in us.

“Therefore, keeping the commandments is “not a condition” of knowing God “but a sign” that one does know God.” - Daniel Akin

The kind of knowing that leads to confidence is deep and personal knowledge. It is something that we innately understand. No one would hire me to be an electrician... or at least, you shouldn't! But, if I told you I know all about it because I watched a video on YouTube, would you then have confidence in my abilities? Absolutely not. See, you and I both know that I acquired some level of knowledge, but it isn't the dug down deep type of personal knowledge through experience. Instead, it is the win-a-round on Jeopardy factual knowledge. You would have confidence in me if I could show you the houses and projects that I completed. It is the same with our Christian life. We can have confidence when we can see the evidence of our beliefs through our lives.

1. **The writer's thought in verses 3–5 has an “A B A” pattern; having stated a contrast to his original point, he now restates the latter once more.** His aim was to reassure his readers, who kept God's commands, that they really did know God and to exhort those who were under the influence of his opponents' teaching to follow his own instruction.¹
2. The condition put forth by John is that we can have an assurance that we know “him” if we obey (keep) his commandments.
 - a. Jn. 14:15 – **“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even**

¹ Ibid., 124.

the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

- b. Therefore, keeping the commandments is “not a condition” of knowing God “but a sign” that one does know God.²
3. **Keyword: “Know”** - When John speaks of knowing God, he uses the perfect tense. **This manner of expression indicates that he is thinking of a past experience which has continuing results: “we have come to know him.”**³
 - a. **Forty-two times in this epistle, John uses a form of the word “know.”** Here the double use of *ginōskō* emphasizes the importance of knowing that one has a relationship with God.⁴
4. John is going to restate this idea in v.5 after the negative argumentation in v.4.
 - a. The words of 2:5b, “This is how we know we are in him” (*en toutō ginōskomen ...*), could be linked with what precedes, and so form, with the opening words of 2:3 (“by this, we can be sure we know him,” *en toutō ginōskomen ...*)⁵
 - i. This phrase will not only look back to v. 3, but also look forward to v. 6.
 1. “This is how we know we are in him” foreshadows the concept of remaining in him, which is developed in 2:6.⁶

It is absurd to claim to be something that your actions prove to be false. (v. 4)

Moving to verse 4, John is going to make the same claim, “obedience gives believers confidence” from the opposite angle. Here he is going to say, “claiming to be something your actions prove otherwise is absurd.” Again, let’s go back to me claiming to be an electrician... no one is or should be buying it! There is no evidence of it in my life. Or, let’s go back to those “As Seen on TV” products; why do they frustrate us? Because they make big claims and then never live up to them. We know what John is saying here in verse 4 to be true from the experience of our lives. John is making a stark contrast here to powerfully remind us of this truth. The truth that our lives as Christians are to be conformed to God’s precepts, plans, and commands.

As believers, we must be able to look at our behavior and find support for it in the Word of God.

Pastor Manny Arango helps us with some centering questions for authentically living the Christian life. He says,

² Daniel L. Akin, 91–92.

³ I. Howard Marshall, 122.

⁴ Ibid., 90.

⁵ Colin G. Kruse, 87.

⁶ Ibid., 87.

- a. Mature Christians don't ask: "Is this sinful?"
- b. Mature Christians ask:
 - i. Is this wise?
 - ii. Does this please God?
 - iii. Does this lead to human flourishing?
 - iv. Does this jeopardize my ability to witness and share the gospel?

Is the flourishing of the gospel the primary objective of our lives?

A short word of caution. John is not commenting on the security of salvation here in this passage. He wants it to be blatantly clear that the Christian life comes with certain ethical requirements. To claim to be a Christian and to willingly not adhere to those ethical requirements should check up our hearts. Remember last week; the Father is faithful to forgive us of our sins through Jesus, who has paid the price for us. This forgiveness is a free gift given to us by God, not earned by our works.

1. Amplification → Repetition and stark contrast

- a. 2:1 – “My Little children” & 2:7 – “Beloved”
 - i. John is writing to a group that he loves.
 - ii. He doesn't want them to miss it!
- 2. “Whoever says/claims” - *ho legōn*, translated respectively as “whoever says” (2:4), “whoever claims” (2:6), and “anyone who claims” (2:9). Each of these statements reflects, directly or indirectly, what the author believed the secessionists falsely claimed and is followed either by a direct rebuttal or by a counterstatement that embodies the characteristics that should be found in those who make such claims.⁷
 - a. The writer now turns to the negative side of the matter and issues a warning to any who claim to have come to know God and yet do not keep God's commandments.⁸
- 3. John also gives an example of the natural behavior of those who do not love God, and are not in God.
 - a. The concomitant behavior of the claimants is depicted as continuous disobedience to God's commands by the use of the present tense in the expression “does not do” (*mē tērōn*).⁹
 - b. The three versions of the heretical assertions about their understanding of sin, specified in 1:6, 8, 10, differ from these claims in that these statements could be adopted by the true believer who is obedient.¹⁰
 - i. In other words, this behavior is incompatible with someone who claims to be in God.
- 4. **Caution:** John is addressing Christian behavior, not salvation.

⁷ Colin G. Kruse, 83.

⁸ I. Howard Marshall, 124.

⁹ Colin G. Kruse, 85–86.

¹⁰ Daniel L. Akin, 92.

- a. This is not a passage on salvation or the security of salvation.
- b. **He wants it to be very apparent that following Jesus comes with some clear ethical demands.**
 - i. **Claiming or teaching anything else is a blatant lie.**
- 5. **Application: As a believer, we must be able to look at our behavior and find support for it in the Word of God.**
 - a. Manny Arango
 - b. Mature Christians don't ask: "Is this sinful?"
 - c. Mature Christians ask:
 - i. Is this wise?
 - ii. Does this please God?
 - iii. Does this lead to human flourishing?
 - iv. Does this jeopardize my ability to witness and share the gospel?
- 6. Our world would be in a better position if we focused on questions #2 & #4.
 - a. **Does this please God?** → How often have we settled on a decision that we know doesn't fully please God, but there just doesn't seem to be a better choice?
 - b. **Does this jeopardize my ability to witness and share the gospel?**
 - i. If our joy is being made complete, what is it being made complete in?
 - 1. John told us → It is made complete in fellowship with the Father through Christ.
 - ii. Joy is a lasting contentment and security through our identity in Christ.
 - 1. **Is the flourishing of the gospel the primary objective of our lives?**

God grows his love in believers. (v.5)

Coming back around to his opening statement in verse 3, John wants to reassure his readers that those who have kept God's commands really do know God and are following him authentically. The way that he does this is through the phrase, "made perfect/complete." What this phrase means is that this act of God growing his love in believers has already happened. It is not something we are hoping to earn one day, and God has already done it. And, proof of this work is our obedience. We obey out of love, not out of fear. Secondly, it also means that this love that is in us lacks for nothing. I.e., It is mature and complete. Why? Because it comes from God. **However, that does not mean that we are mature and complete.**

This does not mean that the believer is made "perfect" on this side of heaven. It means that God's love in the believer is complete and lacks for nothing.

Why do we lack for nothing? Because we have the love of the Father in us, and he is complete, his love is complete, and he has done this work in us. Secondly, he has given us the ultimate model and example in Jesus for how we are to live and love.

1. The writer's thought in verses 3–5 has an "A B A" pattern; having stated a contrast to his original point, he now restates the latter once more. His aim was to reassure his readers, who kept God's commands, that they really did know God and to exhort those who were under the influence of his opponents' teaching to follow his own instruction.¹¹
2. "Perfect" v.5 - The verb translated "made perfect" (*teleioō*) is in the perfect tense and is used four times in this epistle, always to describe the completion or perfection of love. (4:12, 17, 18)¹²
 - a. This action has already happened.
 - i. Our keeping of God's word could be a sign that God's love had done its full work in us.¹³
 - b. This means that that the Christian's love is entire and mature. This does not mean that the believer is made "perfect" on this side of heaven. It means that God's love in the believer is complete and lacks for nothing.**
3. It will become apparent later in the Epistle that by "love," John means the kind of love which God showed in giving his Son to be the Savior of the world. It is the sort of love that does not look for personal reward but for the benefit of the person loved.¹⁴
 - a. "Made complete" means that the Christian's love is entire and mature.¹⁵
 - b. This is the love that is perfected in the lives of believers. An unselfish and unassuming love.**
 - c. As seen in v. 6, it is the love modeled by Jesus.

Jesus is our ultimate example and model for authentic obedience. (v.6)

John has made his teaching clear that being a Christian comes with certain ethical requirements. And we can have confidence in our faith through our obedience. Another way of saying that is, belief must correspond to behavior. Yet, we can hear the question from John's audience because the question is in us too. How do we do this? Here, John gives them a model in verse 6, Jesus. What we will see is that Christian love is always an unselfish love and unassuming love. **A love that puts others first.**

What does Jesus' love and obedience look like?

- 1. He made it a priority to bring the Father glory.**
 - a. Jn. 17:1,4 – **"When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son**

¹¹ I. Howard Marshall, 124.

¹² Daniel L. Akin, 93.

¹³ I. Howard Marshall, 125.

¹⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹⁵ Ibid., 125.

may glorify you,² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.³ And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.⁴ **I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.**"

2. Continually gave the Father credit.

- a. Jn. 5:30 – "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me."

3. Honored the Father when it was hard.

- a. Mk. 14:36 – "And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

4. Resists sin by being rooted in his identity as the Son of God.

- a. Luke 4:5-8 – "⁵And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,⁶ and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."⁸ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

5. He makes the gospel a priority.

- a. Jn. 4:3-4, 39 - "he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.⁴ And he had to pass through Samaria. ... Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."

John wants us to understand that our beliefs must correspond in matching behavior. And he points us to Jesus as the ultimate model and example of this. Again, for those of us that identify as Christians, we must ask, "If a stranger looked at my life for a week, would they see the example of Jesus, or would they see something else?" If the stranger couldn't see the influence or impact of Jesus on your life, John would contend that we are fooling ourselves about our faith. This isn't a call to perfection; none of us are perfect or should pretend to be. **This is an invitation to repent from where we have fallen short and walk forward, putting on the character and priorities of Jesus in our everyday lives more this week than we did last week.** For those of us seeking, searching, or just not entirely convinced of the way of Jesus yet, we are presented with two choices here.

First, keep looking at and examining the person and way of Jesus. Does his way of love and freedom offer you a better response to the events of your week or way of living life?

The second is the choice to follow Jesus. We all want to walk in love and be "better people," but we are constantly faced with our inadequacies and shortcomings. But in Jesus, we find that he is the only one who has walked and lived the life that we are all yearning for. **The great news is that through his sacrifice on the cross and resurrection, we can walk in the fullness of his life. All that we have to do is place our trust in Jesus and say yes to his way of life.**