

## Week Three: Freedom to Obey

### OPENING PRAYER

#### READ | 1 John 2:3-14

<sup>3</sup>We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. <sup>4</sup>The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. <sup>5</sup>But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: <sup>6</sup>Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

<sup>7</sup>Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. <sup>8</sup>Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

<sup>9</sup>Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. <sup>10</sup>Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. <sup>11</sup>But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

<sup>12</sup>I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. <sup>13</sup>I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. <sup>14</sup>I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

### DISCUSS

1. Essentially, John is saying that whole-hearted, full-time obedience is central to knowing God. What's the role of obedience for the follower of Jesus? What's the deception of part-time, selective, or in-public-only obedience?  
*[All of us are inconsistent. And perfect obedience is impossible for us, but we're called to pursue holiness, as God is holy. Some roles of obedience: grateful response to the gospel; honor God; demonstrate the reality of lordship in your life other than your own; Scripture commands it. The deception of partial obedience, or obedience only when others are watching, is that it promises something it can't deliver and points to something that doesn't really exist: genuine belief, knowledge of God, and a gospel-changed life. True knowledge of God means heeding his call by obeying him.]*
2. What do you think John means when he says the person who obeys God's word has God's love "truly made complete" in him or her (v.5)?  
*[To have God's love "made complete" in us means we experience that love in its fullness. Apart from obedient living it is rarely experienced, but with obedient living, it is something God promises us. Caution your group to avoid the misconception that God's love is all about warm, fuzzy feelings, however. Sometimes, God's love is made manifest in our trials.]*
3. What command is John writing about in verse 7? How can it be new and old at the same time? What gives the commandment a sense of newness since Christ's coming?  
*[John's talking about the command to love (see v. 10). In Jesus Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension we have the highest expression of sacrificial love that we will ever see. Therefore, though the command has always been in force, with Christ's coming it has such a luster, shine, brilliance, and glory about it that it is difficult to call it anything but new.]*

### APPLY

Remember what John wrote in the first chapter: we are to take the many imperfections of our hearts and lives to Christ who speaks to the Father in our defense and find our unwavering acceptance there. It's a good thing to examine your faith (something John's letter will continually help you do) and even be willing to find it lacking, but we must not do the examining apart from the assurance of the cross or from the call to go to Christ if we decide our faith was not genuine after all.

1. John focuses on the believer's responsibility to live a life that reflects the grace she's received. If we claim to know God, and that the 'light' of Jesus is indeed in us, how might our lives be evidence of this, beyond things that have the appearance of being 'Christianly': particular traditions, social or political views, subcultures, or other externalisms?
2. In Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension we have the highest expression of sacrificial love that we will ever see. It was a love demonstrated to enemies to turn them into friends. It's the basis of what's referred to as 'the gospel'. What about 'the gospel' do you most often forget? What are you like when you forget this truth?
3. Scripture talks about *freedom in Christ* that can be a person's through his/her belief. How does the gospel of Jesus give us 'freedom to obey' God? How can freedom be experienced through obedience, in light of the gospel?

#### CLOSING PRAYER

- Prayer suggestions:*
- > That our pursuit of a life of obedience in response to the gift of the gospel of grace would be genuinely restorative, and draw us more steadily and joyfully into total dependence on Christ
  - > That the quality of love that John expected in the lives of Christ's followers would be present in our lives and relationships
  - > That we would grow in both personal knowledge of God and personal *acknowledgement* of God in all areas of our lives