

Testing our relationships

Christ Church: 8th May 2022 10.00 am. & online
1 John 2:3-11 + John 13:34,35; John 15:9-14

When studying any Scripture we need to check out (1) the back story or 'surround', (2) what comes just before our passage, and (3) what comes just after. This is vital in today's passage.

The back story on which this passage is clearly linked is Jesus' conversations with the disciples at the Last Supper, as recounted by John himself in his Gospel chapters 13 to 17. We also need to peep back at 1 John 1 and look ahead to 1 John 3.

There are two relationships this passage tells us to check up on.

Our relationship with Jesus 1 John 2:3-6

This is scary! v6 'whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did'. We find the back story in John 15:9,10 so John is simply amplifying Jesus' words to disciples. But can this really be true? Here we need to remind ourselves of 1 John 1:8-10 to put this into context. We must aspire to live as Jesus did (what a role model to follow!), but will continually fail to live up to that standard, so need to confess and be forgiven all the time.

The key idea here is to 'live in Jesus' (v6) or 'abide' in him. This means three things in this order:

- we **know** Jesus personally (vv3,4)
- we **love** him (v5); and then the key idea...
- we **obey** him (vv3-6)

Today's culture has taken the Beatles' song, 'All you need is love' and applied it to any relationship. Not so! Obedience must follow.

So how is your/my relationship with Jesus? Do we **know** him? Are we getting to know him better? Are we developing the friendship? Do we spend time with him each day, in reading and prayer?

Then, do we **love** him? Are we devoted to him and doing his work? It was the question he asked Peter after the resurrection.

Then do we **obey** him? Do we know what that looks like? Do we avoid what he wants us to avoid and do what he wants us to do? It will prove that we know and love him.

Our relationship with other Christians 1 John 2:7-11

To understand what he is getting at with the old command / new command and to put this into context we need the back story, which goes, very briefly, like this.

- 1 The Law of Moses included the command to love your neighbour (Lev 19:18).
- 2 The expert lawyer who tested Jesus got the summary of the Law (love God, love your neighbour) spot on by citing Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18. (Luke 10:25-28)
- 3 John's Gospel shows Jesus teaching the disciples this truth (John 13:34,35 and 15:12,17). Same Last Supper context as our previous point about our relationship with Jesus.
- 4 John eventually comes to the command he is talking about in 1 John 3:11 (we get there in a few weeks' time!).
- 5 And so what he is teaching in our passage 1 John 2:7-11. It's an old command (from the Law of Moses) but is new when we can apply it to Jesus and us TOGETHER in him.

The key ideas in this passage about loving each other are:

- We are **brothers and sisters** as fellow Christians (v10)
- This is a **command** that assumes obedience (v7,8)
- The illustration of **light/darkness** continues from 1:5-7

Today's culture puts us at the centre. But the Christian church is to demonstrate a counter-culture where we serve each other.

So, how is your/my relationship with other Christians? Do we really see each other as **family members**, not just friends or fellow church attenders?

Are we seeking to **grow** our relationship with each other as family, not just attenders of church or home group or whatever?

Are we seeking to walk in the **light** with each other, being open with each other, loving each other as we should?

The challenge for us

So is now a good time to check out our relationships with (1) Jesus and (2) each other? John's epistle demands that we do, because Jesus himself told us to do this.