

# Walking in the Light: Keeping God's Commandments



## SABBATH—JULY 18

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Leviticus 19:18; Luke 14:26; John 3:20; John 13; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:3–11.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “We know that we have come to know God if we obey his commands” (1 John 2:3, NlrV).

**A PASTOR HAD BEEN TRYING TO COUNSEL (ADVISE) A HUSBAND AND WIFE.** The problem? The husband had been committing adultery with many women. The husband admitted to the wife he had been with other women. But it did not mean he did not love her. He said he really loved her more than any of the others.

As could be expected, his words only made the problem much worse. Why? Because if you love someone, you show it by your actions, *not* by your words only.

This week, John talks about what it means to know and to love God. Anyone can say they love the Lord. The question is, How are we to show that love?

**A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** What does it mean to know God, instead of just knowing about Him? Why is obedience to God's law important in our relationship with God? What does John say about Jesus as a Role Model for how we should act? What is the “new commandment” that John gives us? How “new” is it really?

**SUNDAY—JULY 19**

**WHAT DO WE KNOW?  
(1 John 2:3–5)**

The wording “by this we know” (NKJV) appears two times in 1 John 2:3–5. Just what is it Christians know?

First, they have come to know God (verse 3). Second, they “are in Him” (verse 5, NKJV). When we think about our eternal (forever; without end) life or our eternal destruction (read John 5:29), these are important things to know.

At the same time, we have to be careful we do not turn knowledge itself into the only way of being saved. In fact, that idea is heresy (false teaching). This carries the idea that knowledge alone saves us.

*Knowledge (gnosis)* was a serious word in religion in those times. It was an important idea in the religious world of the first several hundred years after Christ. Probably by the second century, it had developed into a full-blown heresy among Christians called Gnosticism.<sup>1</sup> In Gnosticism, people did not care about moral (righteous; holy) behavior. The people were more interested in strange religious feelings and ideas about God and man’s nature. Salvation was received through this secret knowledge rather than through a faith relationship with the Lord.

**What do Matthew 13:11; Luke 1:34, 77; John 17:3; Romans 3:20; 1 Corinthians 8:1; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:18; and 1 John 4:8 tell us about how the New Testament uses the idea of knowledge?**

In the New Testament, *to know/knowledge* has a religious meaning. But it also describes relationships. To know God means to have a very close relationship with Him. Obedience, love, and staying away from sin all point to the life of such a relationship. In this belief, knowledge and experience must go together.



**Love and obedience  
point the way to God.**

The verb *to know* is used often by John. But he does not use the noun *knowledge*. John may have decided to avoid the use of the noun so people would not confuse it with Gnosticism.

**Do you know the Lord, or do you just *know about* Him? What is the important difference between these two ideas? Most important, if you just know about the Lord, how can you change? Why is it important to do so?**

1. Gnosticism—a religion in Paul’s day that taught that Jesus was not an important God. Also it taught people to worship angels and to believe that matter was evil. A Greek religion teaching that there are many gods instead of one God.

MONDAY—JULY 20

KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS  
(1 John 2:3–5)

Anyone can say they know God. In fact, a lot of people have done that, even people in John's day. Many do today too. But talk is cheap.

**For John, what was the outward proof that a person knows God? What else does John say about this topic in John 14:15, 21; John 15:10; 1 John 3:22, 24; 1 John 5:3; Revelation 12:17; and Revelation 14:12? How do these verses tie in with one another? How do they support us, as Seventh-day Adventists, in our belief about the law?**

Keeping the commandments is very important to John and to Jesus. These words show up often in John's writings.

Keeping the commandments is a sign that we know God/Jesus and love Him. Love and obedience are connected. The word *Him* can mean either God the Father or Jesus. It is rather unclear. Perhaps John does it on purpose too. First John 2:4 explains the same truth in negative terms. This may point to a false claim made by those who say you can come to know God but fail to keep the commandments. John attacks this idea in very strong language. He calls anyone who teaches it a liar.

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Love and obedience are connected.

**Why would keeping the law make known our knowledge of God? How does our act of keeping the law show our knowledge of God is real? How is one connected with the other?**

Knowledge of God in the Bible does not mean just knowing facts. It is a knowledge that leads to a love relationship. You cannot truly love someone you do not know. And if you love someone, you are going to act a special way. A man who truly loves his wife is not going to cheat on her. He can announce his love day and night. But if his actions do not really show that love, then John says the man is "a liar."

**What other comparisons<sup>2</sup> can you think of that are helpful in understanding why our obedience and actions together show we know God?**

2. comparisons—the act of showing how two or more things are the same.

## TUESDAY—JULY 21

**WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?  
(1 John 2:6–8)**

Some time ago, it was popular for young Christian people to wear bracelets with the English letters *WWJD* engraved on them. These letters stand for “What Would Jesus Do?” Some people thought the whole idea to be childish. But the idea behind it was good. The idea was when we had a problem, we should think about what Jesus would do. Then we should try to do the same.

This idea fits in perfectly with what John has been saying. The first part of the verses points out that walking in the light and knowing God means being obedient. The second part now asks Christians to follow Christ's example in living their lives. How can they do this? They have to find out how Jesus lived. Daily they must compare their actions to His.

In other words, What would Jesus do?



What would Jesus do?

**Read quickly Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. What are some of your favorite stories of Jesus? What stories really speak to your heart about the kind of person Jesus was? How much like Him are you in these areas?**

The death of Jesus and His resurrection (return to life) are the best parts of the story of Jesus. But enough information on Jesus' teachings and His life also are recorded so we can understand how a person should live.

This is important to remember. Why? Sometimes people want to focus only on Jesus as their Savior and Substitute<sup>3</sup> but not on Jesus as their Lord and Example. John accepted Jesus both as Savior and as an example. In 1 John 1:7, John talked about the cleansing blood of Christ. This cleansing blood points to His death on the cross in our place. According to 1 John 2:2, Jesus is the atoning (forgiving, cleansing) Sacrifice (offering) for our sins. He was our Substitute. But in our verses this week, we also learn that Jesus lived a perfect life. We should follow His footsteps.

**Most of us are facing difficulties in life. Think about your greatest challenge or struggle. Then ask yourself the question, What would Jesus do? After you have decided on the best answer, ask yourself, What is stopping me from doing the same?**

3. substitute—in this case, someone or something that takes the place of another person or thing. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

**WEDNESDAY—JULY 22**

**THE NEW COMMANDMENT  
(1 John 2:7, 8)**

After pointing to the importance of obeying the commandments (1 John 2:3, 4), John introduces the idea of a “new commandment” in verses 7 and 8 (NKJV). What is this “new commandment”? The answer is found in John 13:34.

**What is the meaning in John 13 that helps us understand what this “new commandment” is?**

Jesus has shown His disciples (followers) what it means to serve. Jesus stepped down and did the lowly job of washing someone’s feet. Then He gave His “new commandment.” His disciples should love each other just as Jesus loved them.

Almost the same situation happens in 1 John 2:6–8. John talked about walking as Jesus did. Then John pointed to Jesus’ commandment in John 13. It is this connection with John 13:34, 35 that helps us understand the meaning of 1 John 2:7, 8. This is the commandment about brotherly and sisterly love.

But why does John say he is writing not a new commandment but an old one? That is because the commandment of neighborly love was already in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18). When John wrote his letter, Jesus’ “new commandment” of John 13:34 had already been a commandment for many years.

But in a way, this commandment

was new because it was made real in the life of Jesus (“in Him,” 1 John 2:6, NKJV). And it was to be seen in His followers (“and in you,” verse 8, NKJV) in a new way.

Finally, the idea of God’s law connects the first part (1 John 2:3–6) with the second (1 John 2:7, 8). The commandments are shortened in the commandment to love each other. To walk in the light and to walk as Jesus did means to keep the commandments and love one another.

**When was the last time you washed someone’s feet? If it has been a long time, what does that tell you about yourself in how you relate to others? Why is the kind of death to self that leads to the service of others so hard to do in our own lives?**



**When was the last time you washed someone’s feet?**

**THURSDAY—JULY 23**

**LOVING OTHERS (1 John 2:9–11)**

**What is John saying to us in 1 John 2:9–11?**

## Lesson 4 WALKING IN THE LIGHT: KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

Love was brought up in 1 John 2:5. Clearly that love points to our love toward God. We show this love when we keep His commandments. Love was spoken of again in the new commandment (verses 6–9). Love toward fellow Christians is explained clearly in the last part of our paragraph (verses 9–11). It also begins with the wording “he who says” (read verses 4, 6, 9, NKJV).

Verse 9 talks about the church member who hates his brother. This person is in darkness. Verse 10 shows the positive side. This is a person who loves his brother. Verse 11 returns to the topic of hating one's brother. Such a person lacks understanding. Hate has hardened his or her heart.

**It is a harsh thing to say you hate your brother. We do not like to think we are hateful or that we do hateful things. We may choose to say we are upset or insulted. But the Bible often uses the word *hate* in ways we do not use it today. How is the word *hate* used? And how is it to be understood in Matthew 6:24; Matthew 24:9, 10; Luke 14:26; and John 3:20?**

In the Bible *hate* may mean what we call hate today. It also means we may favor one person over another or fail to care for somebody. In other words, you do not have to hate someone to really mean “hate” in the Bible.

**Is there someone you hate for good reasons? If so, ask yourself the question, What would Jesus do?**

### FRIDAY—JULY 24

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Genesis 39:7–12; Daniel 3:8–18; Revelation 13:16; Revelation 14:5.

Walking in the light means keeping the commandments, living like Jesus, and showing love. These things are very important at the end of the world's history. God's law is being challenged. The issue of true worship and obedience to the Creator will come up more and more. In the Bible, examples are given. They are the people who remained faithful even under the most challenging situations, such as Joseph, Daniel's friends, Daniel himself, and many others. The best example is Jesus. We must make the decision (choice) to follow His example, no matter what.

“John tells us that true love for God will be shown in obedience to all His commandments. It is not enough to believe the theory [idea] of truth. It is not enough to claim faith in Christ. It is not enough to believe that Jesus is not a fake. And it is not enough to say that the religion of the Bible is not a clever tale. . . . John did not teach that salvation<sup>4</sup> was to be earned by obedience. But he did say that obedi-

4. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death.

## Lesson 4 WALKING IN THE LIGHT: KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

ence was the fruit of faith and love.”  
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*,<sup>5</sup> page 563.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ It is one thing to keep the Ten Commandments. But it is another thing to love other people. What is the difference? Which is easier to do? Why?

❷ French philosopher Michel Foucault once showed the difference between two kinds of knowledge: (1) the kind that changed the person who received that knowledge and (2) the kind of knowledge that brought no change at all. What could be some examples of these two kinds

of knowledge? More important, what kind of knowledge is the knowledge of God? What kind of changes should it bring to the people who know it?

❸ How can we avoid falling into the trap of trying to earn our salvation by keeping the commandments? But at the same time, how can we avoid the trap of believing we can be saved when we disobey the law?

❹ What can you, as a class, do to help your local church better understand what it means to show love? Is there even such a thing as corporate (group) love? Try to picture how the perfectly loving local church should be. How well does your local church fit in this picture?

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5. apostles—the disciples (followers) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel (the good news about Jesus) after Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven.