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KNOWING THAT WE KNOW HIM

HOW DO YOU KNOW? | JOHN 2:3-11

How do you know when two people really love each other? It might be the way they look at each other. It could be open displays of affection. They hold hands. Gently kiss each other good-bye. Maybe the way they enjoy each other's company. They laugh at each other's jokes. Even when they are not funny. They engage in animated conversation. They speak fondly of each other, even when they are not together. There are probably a thousand tells.

To really know how deeply two people love each other, you have to dig deeper. You have to enter the sacred space of their hard moments together. A peck on the cheek is sweet, but it does not begin to reveal how fully and completely they have given themselves to one another, or better yet, for one another.

I recently watched my mother-in-law escort her friend, lover, and partner of fifty-eight years into eternity. He was far from the dashing young redhead that won her heart. He was a shell of the man he once was. His final moments were difficult and undignified. She met every indignity with incredible dignity and grace. She did not flinch. She did not sleep. She loved him well. She loved him to the end. Every waking thought was for him. She gave herself completely and unreservedly to him.

How do we know we love God? There is no question about God's love for us. John reminds us, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:10)." He has given himself completely and unreservedly for us.

But what about us? How do we respond to a love of that magnitude? The answer should be obvious. By giving ourselves completely and unreservedly to him. Paul captures the sentiment in his Second Letter to the Corinthians.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

John tells us, "We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands... if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them (1 John 2:3,5)." According to John, we know we love him if we obey his commands.

KEEPING HIS COMMANDS (vv. 3-6)

³ We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.

⁴ Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. ⁵ But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him:

⁶ Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

1. In the moments before Christ was crucified, he poured out his heart to his disciples. John is obviously drawing from those final moments in the upper room. Take a look at John 14:15-24 and consider the following questions.
 - a. Why do you think Jesus chose obedience as the ultimate test of our love for him?
 - b. What happens when we obey his teaching?
 - c. How does our obedience to Christ lead us into deeper intimacy with the Father and the Son?
 - d. What does a lack of obedience reveal about our relationship with Christ?
2. In what ways does obedience make our love for God complete?
3. How does Jesus model a life of obedience?
4. What do you think it means to live the way he lived (or walk the way he walked)?

THE NATURE OF HIS COMMAND (vv. 7-8)

⁷ 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. ⁸ Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

1. Once again, John transports us back to the upper room and our Lord's final moments with the disciples. Read John 13:34-35 and consider the following.
 - a. In what ways is Jesus' command an old command?
 - b. In what ways is it a new command?
2. How are God's commands seen more fully in Christ?
3. How are God's commands seen more fully in us (or the church)?

THE MOST VITAL COMMANDS (vv. 9-11)

⁹ Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. ¹⁰ Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. ¹¹ But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

1. When Jesus is asked "Which is the greatest commandment?", he responds,

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew 22:37-39).

Why do you think John zeroes in on our love for "brother and sister" as the ultimate measure of our love for God?

2. Biblically speaking, what does it mean to "love a brother or sister?"
3. What does it mean to "hate a brother or sister?"
4. How does love for our "brother or sister" keep us from stumbling?
5. How does a failure to love our "brother or sister" lead us into greater darkness and ultimately blind us to the truth?
6. What is your most important takeaway from this study?
7. How will you put it into practice in the days, weeks, and months to come?