

Knowing God

by Anne Graham Lotz

Knowing God begins with a personal experience with Jesus Christ, which is a powerful and life-changing encounter that makes a difference in your life and fulfills the purpose for which you have encountered Him.

Duration: 1:12:40

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Matthew 6:33, Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 John 1:1-4, 1 John 2:1

Topics: "Knowing God"

Description

The video is a sermon on the topic of knowing God, with four main points. The first point is that knowing God begins with a personal experience with Jesus Christ, as stated in 1 John 1:1-4. The speaker emphasizes that John, the Apostle, had personally seen, heard, and touched Jesus, whom he refers to as the 'word of life.' The second point is that God has revealed Himself through His Word, the Bible, allowing us to know His character. The speaker mentions Revelation 4:1-3, where John describes a vision of heaven, highlighting the importance of immersing ourselves in God's Word. The third point is that as believers living in the last days, we should eagerly anticipate the return of Jesus Christ, as mentioned in numerous verses in the New Testament. The fourth point is a personal testimony from the speaker, who witnessed the unjust treatment and crucifixion of Jesus, emphasizing the sacrifice and suffering He endured for humanity.

Transcript

Do you know God? Do you really know God? You know, it's interesting, all the people who say they know God. Saddam Hussein says he knows God, right? George Bush says that he knows God. Nelson Mandela in South Africa says that he knows God.

President de Klerk says that he knows God. Imelda Marcus of the Philippines, with 300 pairs of shoes in her closet, says that she knows God. And Mother Teresa of Calcutta, India, who has no shoes and just the clothes on her back, says that she knows God.

And Billy Graham says that he knows God. And Jim Swigert and Jimmy Baker say that they know God. It's interesting, isn't it? All the different people who say they know God.

And we have so many different people who say they know God. And I wonder if some of the people who say they know God simply know about God and don't really know God. And what difference does it make? Why can't I know God the way I want to know him and you know God the way you want to know him? And

as long as we're sincere and we don't hurt anybody, why can't we each know God in our own way? And the difference that it makes, of course, is when Jesus said he stands at the door of heaven and he's the one, not Peter, who determines who comes into heaven and who is not allowed in.

And he said on that day people will come to him and say, Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name. Lord, Lord, we went to church every Sunday. Our names were on the roll.

We were baptized. We took communion. We've been confirmed.

We're upstanding members. We teach Sunday school. We can pray out loud.

We can quote verses. And the Lord will say, depart from me. I never knew you.

So it's important not just for us to know about God or know God in our own way, but to know God in a relationship that he himself will acknowledge. The apostle John was someone who knew God, and God knew John in a relationship that not only John acknowledged, but God himself acknowledged. And if you'll turn to the first epistle of first John, it's his letter to the Ephesians.

And you'll find it, of course, in the back of the Bible. Turn to Revelation and work your way to the left. Sometimes I get lost in those little letters.

But first, John, and we're just going to be looking basically at the first two chapters as John tells you and me from his own experience what it means to really know God. And I didn't decide on this message until too late to get the outline in your packet. But for those of you who take notes, I would suggest that you take notes.

It helps keep your concentration. And I'll give you the points illiterated, and they're easy to pick up. There are four main points to this message, and I'll give them to you as we go through.

But the first one is that knowing God begins with a personal experience with Jesus Christ. And that's chapter one, verses one to four. And we find that John says, knowing God begins with a personal experience with Jesus Christ in verse one, that which was from the beginning, which I heard, which I have seen with my own eyes, which I've looked at in my hands, have touched.

This is what I'm proclaiming concerning the word of life. And John begins by saying, I have seen him. I have heard him.

I have touched him. This one whom we call the word of life. And that doesn't make much sense to us, except the first little phrase says that which was from the beginning.

And so we think of Genesis chapter one, verse one, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Verse two, the earth was without form and void. Verse three, and God said his word went forth, let there be light.

And there was. And all the way through Genesis chapter one, and God said, you have that little phrase, his word goes forth and whatever he says was so. And we might not think anything about that.

You might think that's just nouns and pronouns and verbs going forth from the mouth of God, except John's gospel chapter one says what? In the beginning was the word and God says, and the word was with God and the word was God. And John chapter one, verse 14 says, and this word, which was in the

beginning with God was God became flesh. And I have seen him and my hands have touched him.

And my ears have heard him. Let me share with you something of John's testimony about his personal experience with Jesus Christ, because John was a disciple of John the Baptist, as you know, and John was standing beside John the Baptist one day beside the Jordan river. And John the Baptist saw Jesus of Nazareth walking by.

And he said, look, there goes the lamb of God, the Messiah, the one who will take away the center of the world. And I, John stopped following John the Baptist. And I went to follow Jesus of Nazareth and I became a disciple of his for three years.

And over that three year period, on many occasions, I saw him and I heard him preach with my own ears and my hands actually touched him, but I'll never forget that Thursday night in Gethsemane. And I was there sleeping when he had told me to pray. And suddenly I woke up and I saw the Roman soldiers coming to arrest him.

And with my own eyes, I saw them bind the hands of Jesus and take him off for trial. And I'm a relative of the high priest. And so I slipped into the courtyard and I watched the proceedings and I saw them as they put him on trial before Annas and then Caiaphas, and then the full Sanhedrin.

And with my own ears, I heard them accuse him of many false things. And in the end, my own ears heard them convict him of blasphemy for claiming to be God walking the earth and a human body for claiming to be the unique son of God. And at that point I saw with my own eyes, the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers take Jesus to the hall of judgment and put him on trial before Pilate.

And I saw him on trial before Pilate and then Herod and back to Pilate. And with my own ears, I heard the Roman courts declare seven different times. This man is innocent.

This man is innocent. This man is innocent. I find no guilt in him, no reason to charge him.

But in the end, I saw with my own eyes, Pilate take a basin of water and wash his hands of responsibility and say, this man is innocent, but you can crucify him. And I saw with my own eyes, the Roman soldiers strip him and beat him until the flesh came off of his body. I saw the blood running.

He was so distorted and so marred. You could hardly tell it was a human person, much less my friend. And then I saw them place the cross on his shoulders and they led him away to Calvary.

And I followed. And with my own eyes, I saw them lay him down on that cross and drive the nails through his hands and through his feet. And I saw them raise the cross up and plant it into the ground like a tree.

And I saw Jesus of Nazareth crucified on the cross. And I stood at the foot of the cross and I watched for six hours as Jesus hung there on the cross. At one point, he even noticed me and he asked me if I would take care of his mother, which I was glad to do for the rest of her life.

And at the end of that six hour period, I heard with my own ears, Jesus of Nazareth cry out in a loud voice, it is finished. And I saw with my own eyes, Jesus of Nazareth deliberately bow his head and stop breathing. I saw Jesus down the cross.

There was no mistake about it. And I went back to that upper room in Jerusalem, absolutely devastated. My life fell apart.

Do you understand? I had thought Jesus was the Messiah. I thought he was the Christ. I thought he was the Redeemer.

I thought he was the son of God. And he had gone and died on a Roman cross like a criminal. My life just fell apart.

I was angry. I felt deceived. I was embittered.

And I went back confused and locked myself into that room with those other disciples. We barred the windows, locked the door. The hours just ran together until before I knew it, it was Sunday morning and I heard someone banging on the door.

I thought the Roman soldiers had come to get us. And then I heard a woman's hysterical voice outside and I opened the door. It was Mary and she was hysterical and she was saying something about grave robbers and the tomb was empty.

And I looked at Peter and Peter looked at me and we had the same thought. We ran through that open door and through the early morning streets of Jerusalem. We came to the tomb where I knew they had laid Jesus and the stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty.

And I ran inside that empty tomb. And let me tell you what I saw. Nothing was in the tomb except one thing.

There were grave clothes lying in the tomb. The grave clothes with which they had wound the body of Jesus. And the interesting thing about the grave clothes was that they were lying there as though the body was inside, but there was no body.

It was like an empty cocoon as though the body had just evaporated up through the grave clothes. And I knew Jesus of Nazareth had risen from the dead. Don't ask me how I knew, but I went back to that upper room in Jerusalem more confused than ever.

And Sunday afternoon, I heard with my own ears, that very familiar voice say, peace, it is I, be not afraid. And I turned and with my own eyes, I saw Jesus of Nazareth standing before me. I saw the wound in his brow where the thorns had been.

I saw the wounds in his hands and feet. And then he said, John, touch me. And I reached out and I put my fingers in his nail prints and I thrust my hand into his side.

And I'm here to tell you, I had a personal encounter with the risen, living Lord Jesus Christ. And that dear friends is where knowing God begins. When have you ever encountered Jesus Christ personally like that? When have you heard Jesus speaking to you? And I don't mean with your physical ears.

I mean with the ears of your heart. Have you ever heard Jesus speaking to you, for instance, through a verse like John 3, 16, and my father so loved you that he created you, brought you into existence because he wanted you to know him. And then sin came into your life and broke that relationship for which you were created.

But he so loved you that he sent me to earth to die on the cross, to take away your sin, that if you would place your faith in me, he would forgive you of your sin and bring you into a right relationship with himself. And Anne, I so love you that when my father said, go to earth and die for Anne Lotz, I went and I died for

you, that you might have forgiveness of sin, that you might have eternal life, that you might know my father. Have you ever heard Jesus speaking to you by name, personally like that, through his word? And having heard him speak, when have you actually seen him? And I don't mean with your physical eyes, but your eyes of faith.

You know how the world sees Jesus. They see Jesus as just a man. Oh, maybe a very good man, a great prophet, a world leader, but they don't see him as the unique son of God.

When have you seen him as the Savior, the Lamb of God, by whose stripes you're healed? When have you seen him as your Redeemer, your Lord, your King? And having seen him as Savior and Lord and King, when have you reached out to touch him? And I don't mean with your physical hands, when have you embraced him with your arms of faith and said, Lord, I have heard you speaking to me, saying you died for me, and I have seen you as my Savior, the Lamb of God who died to take away my sin, and I reach out to claim you for myself, and I invite you to come into my life as my Savior and my Lord. The Bible says, knowing God begins with a genuine experience of personally encountering Jesus Christ. Do you know God? Could it be you've missed this first step, and you simply know about him? But John goes on to say that a genuine experience not only has a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, but a powerful encounter.

Verse 2, the life appeared. We have seen it, and we're testifying to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. And he's speaking of Jesus, but he uses the description of life, and again and again he says life, life, because to meet Jesus is a life-changing experience.

You cannot meet Jesus Christ and remain the same. And if John were to continue giving you his testimony, he would say, listen, I was just the son of Zebedee, just the brother of James of backwoods, Galilean fisherman. If I walked down the street, nobody would know me.

Maybe my friends and neighbors, but I was just a nobody. And not only a son of Zebedee, they called me a son of thunder because I had such a violent temper. In fact, we were going through a little town one time, and they refused to receive what Jesus said.

And I said, Jesus, why don't you just send them all to hell? Rain down fire on them. I just exploded with my temper. And then they also called me a zealot because I thought the way to solve the problems of society was through politics and through the military, through the economy.

And then I met Jesus, not just met Jesus, but I had a personal encounter with the risen, living, resurrected Jesus Christ, and my life changed. Oh, I'll always be a son of Zebedee and a brother of James, but I'm no longer a nobody. In Christ, I am somebody.

I am an apostle of Jesus Christ. My writings are recorded in the Bible. My name is written on the foundations of heaven.

And a son of thunder? You know what they call me? They call me the apostle of love. In a superficial reading of my writings, people think I'm sort of wimpy because I'm so sweet and gentle, and they don't understand the work of God's grace to take away my temper. And a zealot? I discovered I still want to change society and meet society's needs, but I found you'll never do it through the economy, through politics, through military means.

If you want to change society, you change the hearts of men and women, bringing them into a right relationship with their creator. And I set about to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. I became an evangelist of the world.

I began planting churches all over the world. My life has changed. Listen, dear friend, let me ask you, you say you have personally encountered Jesus Christ.

You claim to be saved, born again a child of God. Then what difference has it made in your life? Can you pinpoint a time when you met Christ? What difference is there in your life from that point to now and from that point previous? If there is no difference, if there is very little difference, I want to question your encounter. It may be that you had some sort of subjective experience or you went through some ritual in your church, but it wasn't a personal encounter with the living, risen Jesus Christ.

Because if you've encountered him personally, it's also a powerful encounter and it makes a difference. You cannot encounter Jesus personally without it also being a powerful difference in your life. Knowing God begins with a genuine experience of encountering Jesus personally, powerfully, thirdly, purposefully.

And in verse three, he says, we proclaim to you what we have seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with one another. There is a purpose for your encounter with Jesus Christ, and the purpose is threefold. Number one, he says, we're proclaiming this, that you might share Christ with those who don't know him.

John wrote the gospel of John, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with those who didn't know Jesus. And one of the purposes for which you've encountered Christ is not just your own salvation, not just your own relationship with God, but that you might share Jesus Christ with those who don't know Jesus Christ. When have you done that? When have you shared Jesus with someone who doesn't know Jesus? I don't mean when have you invited someone to church, although please do that.

And I don't mean when you've discussed your denomination with someone, although that's valid. I mean, when have you named the name of Jesus with somebody who doesn't know him? We took a few minutes of lunch yesterday coming up from Raleigh. We stopped in Winston-Salem, and with a little waiter who was waiting on us, he kept seeming to hang around and talk, and we began to share Jesus with him.

And he kept talking about all these reasons he couldn't believe, and all of the arguments, and turned out he'd studied philosophy and religion, and he knew a lot of things, but he didn't know Jesus. And we just had the joy of sharing Jesus with him. Now, we didn't lead him to Christ.

We gave him a little booklet that would show him how to do that, but we named the name of Jesus with him and let him know the difference between just intellectually understanding facts and having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It's a joy to share Christ. One of the reasons for which you have encountered him yourself is that you might share him with others.

But secondly, not only were we to share Christ with those who don't know him, but to strengthen Christians who do know him. John says, not only are we proclaiming this to those who don't know him, we're proclaiming this so that you might have fellowship, so that you might be strengthened in your faith. One of the purposes for which we know Jesus is to strengthen other believers in their faith and their relationship with him.

What are you doing to strengthen somebody else in their faith? I have friends at home who pray for me every day, and once a week, they gather together on Friday mornings to pray for me and what I'm doing in the ministry to which God has called me. Once in a while, one of them will pick up the phone, and they'll just call me and say, Anne, you've been on my heart this morning, and I just want to pray for you over the phone. And they're right there, just while I'm hanging onto the phone, and they're on the other end.

They'll just pray for me in the way they feel encouraged to do so, and I feel strengthened, not only knowing that the Lord put me on their mind, that they would be praying for me, but that they would take the time to pick up the phone, call me, and pray for me in my own hearing over the phone. Or sometimes, they'll pick up the phone and just have a verse for me, and say, Anne, I was thinking about you this morning, and in my devotions, I read such and such. Helen did that this morning.

We stayed overnight at my parents' home in Montreat, and she got up this morning and opened her Bible, and from the book of Ezekiel, which is one of the least read books in my Bible, she pulled some verses to encourage me for this morning. Just seeking to strengthen Christians who know Christ. What are you doing to strengthen Christians who already know Him? Someone in your church, someone in your family, making the effort, taking the time, going out of your way to encourage them and build them up in their faith.

That's one of the reasons for which you know Christ, that you might build up others who know Him. The third reason is that you might be satisfied in your own relationship with Christ. Verse 4, it says, we write this to make our joy complete.

Now, he's writing this little book, and he wrote the Gospel of John to share Christ with those who don't know Him, to strengthen Christians who do, but he said the result of that is that it makes our joy, your joy, and my joy complete. In other words, John is saying, when I share Christ with those who don't know Him, when I strengthen Christians who do, I feel satisfied myself. There is a certain satisfaction in the Christian life that is reserved only for those who are fulfilling the purpose for which they have encountered Christ.

I go around in my travels and in my ministry, and I meet many Christians who are saved, but they're not satisfied. And I think that's a very scary place to be. And I wonder if there's someone here this morning who is saved, and you know you are, you know you have eternal life, you're going to heaven when you die, but you're not satisfied in your Christian life.

You feel like there must be something more. Maybe that's why you came this morning. You're looking for something more.

And I think it's a scary thing because if you came to Christ and someone said, when you come to Jesus, He will give you peace and joy and fulfillment and satisfaction. And you came to Jesus and He did for how long? A week, a month, two months. When did you lose it? And it may be, if you're not satisfied in your Christian life, it may be that you're not fulfilling the reason, the purpose for which you've encountered Christ, which is to share Christ and to strengthen other Christians.

Are you involved? Are you serving? Do you have a sense of God being magnified and glorified in your life as you seek to strengthen others and share Christ with others? If you're not involved and you're not doing two things, you're not going to be satisfied. But God means for you and me to be satisfied in our Christian life. But it's something that we receive conditionally as we share Christ, as we strengthen believers, we are satisfied in our Christian life.

That's one of the purposes for which you have encountered Christ. Knowing God begins with a genuine experience of personally, powerfully, purposefully encountering Jesus Christ. Now, may I ask you, what could you be substituting for knowing God through a genuine experience with Jesus Christ? Have you substituted church membership? Have you substituted church service? Have you substituted baptism or confirmation or taking communion? There are no substitutes.

If you want to know God in a relationship that God acknowledges, then you must have a genuine experience of personally, powerfully, purposefully encountering Jesus Christ. And secondly, John says that knowing God continues to grow as you have a genuine examination of the Scriptures. And this is verses 5 to 10.

As the Apostle Paul was traveling around Europe on his third missionary journey, excuse me, second missionary journey, he came down through these different cities and everywhere the Apostle Paul went, he would preach in the synagogues and the people would rise up in rejection of him. Some people received him, but the majority rejected him and he was thrown out after synagogue, after synagogue, after synagogue. They just rebelled against him.

He came into one town and he said, oh no, this is the man that's turning the world upside down. Everywhere he goes, there's revolution. The majority rejected what he had to say.

There was a minority that received it, except in one town. In all of the Apostle Paul's journeys, three journeys, all over the known world of that day, there was one town that was different from all the others. When he went into that town and he went right into the synagogue, as he always did, and he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, normally the people rose up and said, we've never heard this before.

This isn't what our preacher preaches. This doesn't go along with our denomination. We don't like this.

We don't think this is right. And they would throw him out. In this one town, he got up to preach the same message for which had been rejected all over the world.

And these people, do you know what they did? They opened their Bibles and they began to examine the scriptures to see if what Paul said was true. And they go down for all eternity, recorded in the scriptures as the most noble Bereans who, when the Apostle Paul went in to preach something that was radically new, they took the time to examine the scriptures to see if what he was saying was the truth. And so knowing God requires a genuine examination of the scriptures, not just once and for all, but on a daily basis, you will know God through his word.

And it requires an examination, thoughtful, careful study and meditation of his word. Verse five, this is the message we have heard from him and declare to you. And John is saying, this is the message I have heard from God.

This is the message I'm declaring to you. Now, John was an apostle and he heard this message in a very unique way. I don't know how John heard the message, but I know for you and me, when he says, this is the message I have heard from God.

This is the message I'm declaring to you. This is the message, the message that's recorded in the scriptures, not just the message John heard, but when he says we, he's speaking of all the prophets, all the apostles. This is the message from Genesis to revelation that apostles and prophets have heard from God.

They have written it down, recorded it. This is what is declared to you and me. So John is referring to the Bible.

He's referring to the scriptures, God's word. When he says this is the message we've heard from him and this is what we're declaring to you. And then he says, interesting.

This is the message that's in God's word. God is light in him. There is no darkness at all.

And I asked myself, why would he say God is light? Why not? God is holy. God is true. God is just.

God is angry. God is righteous. Why would he say God is light? And then I thought, you know, the primary characteristic of light is that light reveals itself, doesn't it? Light makes itself visible.

So John is saying the message we've heard from him and declare to you is this through the Bible. You can know the character of God. You can know God as he is.

God has revealed himself. God has made himself visible through his word. Turn over to revelation chapter four for a minute.

Just a few pages to the right. Revelation chapter four, the first three verses. And this is the same apostle John who says, after this, I looked and there before me was a door standing open in heaven.

And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, come up here and I will show you what must take place after this. At once I was in the spirit and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. Chapter five, verse one.

Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne, a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals, verse 13. And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them singing to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever. And I read those few verses to you for this reason, to emphasize the fact that somewhere in the universe, there is a throne and on this throne, there is someone sitting and he has a presence in that he can sit and he has a hand in that he can hold the scroll.

He has a mouth in that he can speak. And John says that through God's word, you can know the character of him who sits on the throne. This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you.

God is light. God has revealed himself, made himself visible through the word. You can know the character of God through the Bible.

I was giving a message at a very large secular gathering. There were about 2,000 people at this breakfast meeting. It was one of these civic club kinds of things, a national convention.

And I gave a message and lifted up Jesus to the best of my feeble ability. And when it was over, the emcee stood up and he leaned on the podium sort of like this. And I was sitting there and he looked at me and he said, Mrs. Lotz, we think you need to know that we all have our own gods.

And some of us call him Allah and some of us call him Buddha. Some of us call him Mohammed. Some of us call him Messiah.

Some of us may call him Jesus. And I didn't respond because I had just given the message, but you know what I was thinking in my heart? I don't want to know God like that. If there is a God and he has a presence and he has a will and emotions and a personality, and he has a name by which he calls himself, I want to know him as he is.

I don't want to know him the way somebody says he might be. I don't want to know him the way someone thinks he is. Have you ever heard someone say, well, my God is not like that.

And my God would never send anybody there. And I don't think God would do this. And I don't think God will do that.

And, and I'm tired of hearing what they think. I don't want to know their opinions. I don't want to know their ideas.

I want to know God as he is. I want to know him by the name he calls himself. John says, this is the message we've heard from him and declare to you, God is light.

You can know the character of God through his word. Secondly, he says, not only does your examination of the scripture reveal the character of God, but secondly, you can have communion with God, fellowship with the one who sits on the throne. Now, if it's not mind blowing enough to think that you can know God, the character of God who sits on the throne, it's more mind blowing to think that the God who sits on the throne at the center of the universe has revealed himself in such a way that you and I can have communion with him.

We can have fellowship with him. I love the songs that were selected to sing right before the message. And I feel like that's evidence that the Holy Spirit has helped in planning today.

Each one was pointing to that personal relationship that you can have with God. We walk in the garden alone with him and in a whole setting, the whole message of the song is that we can know God in an intimate fellowship in a communion with God. And John says that's right, that through God's word and a careful examination, study, meditation on the scriptures, you can have communion with the one who sits on the throne.

And you have communion in two ways. First of all, by kneeling at the cross of Jesus Christ, verse seven, the blood of Jesus, his son purifies us from every sin and we kneel at the cross initially for forgiveness. Have you ever done that? Just come to the cross once and for all and ask God by your faith in Jesus Christ to cleanse you with the blood of Jesus of every and all sin.

You know, I talk to people who say they're saved, but they don't have an assurance of their forgiveness. And I even meet Christians that are so afraid that if they die today, suddenly in a car accident and have not had opportunity to confess all their sins from the last time they confessed their sin, that somehow they would be held accountable for the sins they haven't confessed. And they don't understand the forgiveness that the blood of Jesus, his son purifies us from every sin, meaning from the moment you are saved, all of your sin, all of the sin prior to that, all of the sin on that day, all of the sin up until the day you see Jesus is all forgiven.

Past, present, future. It's all washed away in the blood of Jesus. And you can live in your forgiveness.

You'll never be held accountable for it. Let me ask you, some of you, maybe that's a new thought for you. When Jesus died to take away your sin, it was 2000 years ago, right? Long before you'd ever been born, long before you'd ever committed a sin.

And when you claim his death on that cross 2000 years ago, it covers all of the sin of all of your life. Past, present, future. You're forgiven.

You'll never be held accountable for your sin and the guilt of your sin ever again. Isn't it wonderful to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus? Not only does it take care of past, present, future sins, you know, it takes care of big ones and little ones and medium sized ones. I was explaining this to Velma Barfield, as you might remember, the only woman or the first woman in a long time in the United States to be executed for murder.

She had murdered many people, one of them, including her own mother. And it was my privilege to become Velma's friend for several months before she was executed. And a week before execution, they called me in because she was struggling with something of the assurance of her salvation.

Now, she had received Christ in the Robertson County Jail right after she had been arrested for the murders. And she had lived for Christ for six years within prison. And the guards and the other inmates will testify to the genuineness of her of her faith.

But she had called me in a week before execution, just knowing that she was going to face God, needing reassurance that she was forgiven. And I said, Velma, when you go to the beach and I said, have you been to the beach? And she said, yes. And I said, when you go to the beach, you're sitting there on the sand and you see little crab holes? And she said, yes.

And I said, if you walk farther down the beach, you might see where a child has been building a sandcastle and there's a bigger hole. And she said, yes. And I said, if you go farther down the beach, you'll come to a place where maybe they're digging a trench or an excavation for a sewer pipe or something.

And there's a huge hole. And she said, yes, I've seen those. And I said, and Velma, when the tide comes in, what happens? And she said, well, the water covers all of those holes equally.

And I said, Velma, you've got it. The blood of Jesus Christ, when you claim it for yourself, it covers all sin equally. Little ones like white lies, gossip, worry, just not trusting the Lord.

Medium sized ones. Maybe we might think of losing our temper or shoplifting or big ones like murdering your mother and adultery and rape. All of those sins under the blood of Jesus.

And we're forgiven. Isn't it wonderful? Just God's grace. And you can have communion with God when you come and kneel at the cross initially for forgiveness.

But then John says, if you want to have communion with God, you can be saved, you understand, and not have communion with God. So you can be saved and be out of communion, out of fellowship with God. But he says, if you want to have communion, you kneel at the cross initially for forgiveness, but then you kneel at the cross daily for fellowship.

Verse nine, if you confess your sin, he's faithful and just to forgive you your sin and cleanse you of all unrighteousness. And John is not speaking in this case of when you come initially for forgiveness. He's

talking about daily coming back and confessing your sin just to maintain your fellowship with the Lord.

Do not misunderstand. You don't have to come back every day and confess your sin for forgiveness. You're forgiven.

You know how you hear people pray and every time they pray, they said, and forgive us our many sins. Amen. It's meaningless.

If you've come to the cross initially, you're forgiven. You don't have to ask for it again, but you come back every day for cleansing that the Lord might cleanse you of your sin and that you might have fellowship with him. And it says, if we confess our sin and the word confess doesn't mean that you just name it.

It literally means that you say the same thing about your sin that God says about it. And you think about that for a minute, because I think we've gotten so good at playing games with what we call sin. And we give it different labels to make it seem less like sin.

We call lying exaggeration, and it makes it seem less like lying, right? Or we'll call unbelief worry, and it makes it seem less like sin. And we'll call homosexuality gay, and it makes it seem less like sin. And we call adultery a love affair, and it makes it seem less like sin.

You see, we can just go on in that list that the games we play with the labels we give sin, but in God's eyes is still unbelief. And it's still lying, and it's still adultery, and it's still homosexuality. It's still sin.

So John says, if you're wanting to have communion with God, you've got to come to him every day and confess your sin, say the same thing about it that God says. God, it is jealousy. God, it is anger.

God, it is worry. It is unbelief. God, it is lust.

And you just name it before him and ask him to cleanse you. You've already been forgiven, but you're just asking him to cleanse you and wash you clean that you might maintain fellowship with him. Have you ever lost your temper with your husband? Or maybe your teenager has lost their temper with you, and you know how you just, there's just a frigid air, and nobody's really talking to anybody, and until what? Until you go to your husband and say, honey, I'm sorry I lost my temper this morning.

And maybe you had good reasons. The toddler was screaming, you had a headache, you didn't get any sleep last night, somebody was calling you on the phone, the toast was burning, and he said something about what you hadn't made time to do, and you just popped off at him. And maybe there was good reason, but it still was a loss of temper, wasn't it? It was anger.

And you just name it and say, I'm sorry for being angry with you this morning. And then what? Then the relationship is restored. Or your teenager may do that with you.

And until they come and confess it to you by name and set it right, then there is a break in your relationship. They're still your teenager, and you're still married to your husband. You still have the relationship, but there is a barrier in it.

And that's what John is saying. If you want to have communion with God when there are no barriers in the relationship, then you must come to the cross daily, confessing your sin for that fellowship. So having communion with God comes when you kneel at the cross, initially for forgiveness, daily for fellowship, but also when you walk in the light.

And John says in verse 6, if we claim to have fellowship with him, yet we walk in the darkness, we're lying and don't live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. Now, what does it mean to walk in the light? Every morning that I'm home, I meet two friends and we walk three miles every morning.

Now we're doing it at six o'clock in the morning because it's light early. And when we walk our three miles, we have two basic rules. And the two rules are this, that we must walk in the same direction and we must walk at the same pace, or we're not going to walk together.

So if you're going to walk in the light, and we've already been told God is light. So to walk in the light means to walk with God. If you're going to walk with God, you've got to walk at his pace.

What does that mean? It means daily, moment by moment, obedience to his word. How can you obey his word if you're not reading it? If you're not examining the scriptures, how will you know what pace he's walking at? And God doesn't adjust his pace for you and for me. We have to adjust our pace for him.

So to walk with God, you've got to walk step by step in obedience to his word, meaning you've got to be in the scriptures. And then we've got to walk in his direction. And what does that mean? It means that we're going to surrender the control of our lives to him.

Surrender to his will. We can't be going off in our direction. We can't say, God, we want to live our life this way, or we want to know you, but we want this plan for our lives.

We just surrender that to him and say, God, we'll walk in your direction. Whatever you want, whatever you say is what we'll do. And God doesn't change his direction for you.

You and I have to change our direction for him if we want to walk with God. John says, if you want to have communion with the one who sits on the throne, you must kneel at the cross and you must walk in the light. Moment by moment, obeying his word, moment by moment, surrendering to his will.

Are you walking in the light? You know, you can be walking in the light one moment and in darkness the next, can't you? Because he'll be telling you that you're going to do something. You say, fine. And then all of a sudden he says, but I want you to do this.

And you say, wait a minute. I want to do this. And we go off in our own direction, just like that.

We'll be in the darkness. John says you won't have communion with God in the darkness. You only have communion with God in the light, obedient to his word, surrendered to his will.

Knowing God, you grow in that knowledge as you have a genuine examination of the scriptures, because through the scriptures, you'll know the character of God. Through the scriptures, you can have communion with God. May I ask you, what are you substituting for knowing God that you might know the character of God, that you might have communion with God? Thirdly, John says that knowing God involves a genuine expression of holiness in your life.

And this is an easy one to explain because our newspapers in recent years have been filled with people who said they knew God, but they didn't give out this genuine expression of holiness. In other words, their walk didn't match their talk. And if your walk doesn't match your talk, then you're living a lie.

And the Bible says, you don't know God. A person who knows God, certainly we sin and we make mistakes, but we are growing in our knowledge of him. And increasingly other people ought to be able to see Jesus in us.

They ought to see an increasing holiness in our lives. So he gives six characteristics of holiness that ought to be evident in your life if you're growing in knowledge of God. The first one is purity.

Chapter two, verse one, my dear children, I'm writing this to you so that you will not sin. And he is saying that those who are growing in their knowledge of God do not deliberately, do not consciously, do not willfully sin. Sin makes us sick.

If you've ever knelt at the cross and seen what it costs Jesus to take away your sin, you don't want to sin anymore. We don't willfully, deliberately, consciously involve ourselves in a sinful lifestyle or in actions and attitudes of sin. There is a purity in our lives.

I wonder what sin do you need to nail to the cross, remove from your life, stop in order that other people might see this purity. Do you know when you receive Jesus by faith as your savior, he came into your life in the person of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is holy, separate from sin.

And when he comes into your life, one of the first things he does is give you the desire to be holy and separate from sin. And as you yield your life to the control of the Holy Spirit, he gives you the power to be holy and separate from sin. And increasingly, progressively, other people ought to see that purity in your life and my life.

Knowing God involves a genuine expression of holiness that's going to be characterized by purity, characterized by humility. Verse one, but if anyone does sin, you have one who speaks to the Father in your defense, Jesus Christ, the righteous one. He is the atoning sacrifice for your sin, not only for yours, but also for the sin of the whole world.

And John is very realistic because he says, you and I don't want to sin and we don't involve ourselves consciously, deliberately, willfully in sin, but we sin, don't we? I mean, since receiving Christ as savior, I have sinned every day. So there is much sin in my life. And he says, when you sin, every day you come back confessing your sin at the foot of the cross that you might walk in the light.

And you come back daily for that cleansing and that fellowship. And when you're kneeling at the cross every day, confessing your sin by name, calling it what God does. And you look over and you see somebody else kneeling at the cross and they're confessing their sin.

And you see there's no room for self-righteousness. There's no way I can think I'm better than you or you're better than somebody else. No room for judgmentalness.

There is a humility that's born at the foot of the cross. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. We all have to come back every day to the same place, confessing our sin, that we might be cleansed if we have communion with God.

And there is a deep humility in the life of someone who's growing in their knowledge of God. Thirdly, there is a complicity to God's word. In verse three, we know that we've come to know Christ, know God, if we obey his commands.

The woman who says, I know God, but does not do what God commands is a liar and the truth is not in her. So one of the requirements, one of the evidences of knowing God and growing in that knowledge is that there's going to be an obedience, a complicity to God's word in your life. And let me ask you, how can you obey God's word if you're not reading it? Or if you're only reading it on Sunday morning or Wednesday night.

God has said many things and he's given many commands. And I found that if I want to be obedient, I've got to read God's word every day. If I'm going to even halfway, keep up with them all.

If I'm wanting to be obedient. And so for a person who's growing in their knowledge of God, there needs to be daily Bible reading and that complicity to what they're reading, that obedience to God's word. Fourthly, there'll be a genuine expression of maturity in your life.

Verse five, if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete or mature in her. And this is how you know you are in Christ, how you know you're saved, born again. Whoever claims to be born again in him must walk as Jesus walked.

There is an increasing maturity in your life and a confidence that comes from experiencing the love of God in you and through you for other people and also walking as Jesus walked. And we already know what it means to walk with him, obedience to his word, he surrendered to his will. And you can know that you're born again.

You can know that you're saved when you're walking with him. I led a person to Christ one time and about a year later, she came to me and she was really wrestling with the assurance of her salvation. And she said, Anne, how can I know that I'm saved when I prayed to receive Christ with you? Was it just an emotional experience or was I truly born again? And I said, listen, if you're doubting whether or not you've been born again, if you doubt that you really know God through a personal experience with Jesus Christ, then just confirm it one more time.

Get on your knees and confess your sin by name, all the specific ones that come to your mind, as well as general ones. And the fact that we're all sinners before God and then tell God you're willing to repent of your sin, stop sinning, if he'll help you. Ask him to forgive you through the blood of Jesus, claim him as your savior, invite him to come into your life as Lord.

I said, go through those steps one more time and then get up off your knees and by faith, believe that God will honor his word and honor your faith in his word. And just by faith, believe you've been born again. And then you start walking and you walk as Jesus walked.

You start obeying his word that you read every day and you start surrendering to his will. Let him have control of your life. And I gave her some other things to do.

And I said, increasingly, there's going to be a maturity in your life. You will no longer doubt your salvation. A person who is growing in their knowledge of God, a person who is mature in their faith, is not always doubting whether or not they're saved.

The Bible teaches you can know that you know you belong to God through Jesus Christ. You are not meant to go through life insecure in your relationship with God. God promises us one of the promises he gives you is that the Holy Spirit will come into you and give you that witness that he is within you.

You'll have fellowship with him and him with you and there'll be the witness of the Spirit and you'll know that you belong to him. Is there someone here this morning doubting your salvation? You don't have an assurance that you belong to God. And you're afraid if you were to die today, you're not sure you would go to heaven.

The Bible says you can know that you know you're going to heaven with a rock-like confidence, not based on feeling or an experience, based on his word. It says if you'll come to the cross and confess your sin, you're willing to repent of it and claim the blood of Jesus for forgiveness and ask him to be your Savior, invite him in as your Lord, you can by faith in his word know that he will honor your faith and whether you feel like it or not you are born again supernaturally by the power of God and then you start walking. You start reading your Bible, you start applying it to your life, you live by it, you surrender to his will and you will know.

I received Christ when I was a girl at my mother's knee in Montreat in response to a little film that I'd seen. It was at Easter time one year when I was about four or five and then it was maybe 20 years ago that I really surrendered my life to Christ just in more depth, but you know I can't remember the last time I doubted my salvation. In fact, it's so long ago I can't remember ever doubting my salvation.

You get off that first step. Yes, you've got to have the first step. You have to have a genuine experience of encountering Jesus Christ, but you claim that by faith and then you get on with the Christian life and stop doubting it.

Stop praying for your salvation. Stop praying for assurance and security. You just get on with it and as you get on with it and you begin to walk with the Lord, you'll know that you belong to him.

That's maturity. One of the evidences that you're growing in your knowledge of God. Fifthly, there should be a unity in your life with other believers.

Verse nine, anyone who claims to be in the light but hates her brother or her husband or her mother-in-law or her neighbor or her daughter-in-law is still in the darkness. Whoever loves her brother, her husband, her neighbor, her mother-in-law, her teenager lives in the light. In other words, John is saying you cannot be out of fellowship with another believer and in fellowship with God at the same time.

I think I'll repeat that. You cannot be out of fellowship with God and in fellowship, out of fellowship with another believer and in fellowship with God at the same time. Because you see, if you're out of fellowship with another believer, you're in the darkness and God is light.

You can't be in the light and be out of fellowship with that other believer. Now let me say that I know there are times when you have a broken relationship and you do everything you can to restore that relationship and the other person will not reconcile. And God understands that.

And first John continues in this letter to address that particular situation and says when your heart makes you feel guilty as though you haven't done enough, then God will give you peace in your heart. But have you done everything you can to restore that relationship? From whom are you estranged? What relationship do you have where you're experiencing a separation? And would you have unity with that other believer? And I'm speaking specifically of believers and Christians. Somebody in your church or your family, a friend.

Would you have unity with that person if you took the first step? If you went home this afternoon and wrote a letter? Or if you picked up the phone and placed a phone call? Or if you drove by and went to see them even before you went home and said, I'm sorry. And you said, please forgive me. And you said, I want to make this relationship right.

That's what John's talking about. How many of us refuse to take the first step? We refuse to initiate the reconciliation. And he says, if you can do it and you're not doing it, then you can't be in fellowship with God.

There should be a unity in our lives with other believers. And then lastly, if you're giving a genuine expression of holiness in your life, there should be loyalty in your life to Jesus Christ. Verse 15.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in her. And God is not talking about the world of nature.

Because I drive up into the mountains and when I hit hickory and I see the first mountains, I just get so excited. And I love to see the clouds on them. And I love to come up and see the little bits of spring coming.

And we took a walk yesterday afternoon and I saw the blood roots blooming. I can't remember when I've been home when the blood roots were blooming. And I love to see that in the redwood trees and the weeping cherry trees.

And I love the world of nature. John's not talking about that. He's talking about the world of men and the atmosphere in the world.

And you know what it's like, the pace of the world that keeps you so busy it makes no time for an examination of the Scripture. So busy it makes no time for God. The pattern of the world's behavior, which is based on what? Oprah Winfrey and Phil Donahue and what the magazine says or what the pop psychologist says or what the little tabloid says as you check out at the grocery store or what the world says.

The preoccupation with pleasure, the priority of me first and the selfishness that permeates the world. And John says, in as much as you are loyal and caught up in that world, you are not loyal and you do not love God. Because you and I are not walking at the world's pace, are we? We're walking in the light.

And you and I don't live according to the pattern of behavior in the world. We live according to the principles of Scripture. And you and I are not preoccupied with pleasure.

We're preoccupied with the kingdom of God. And our priority is not me first, it's Jesus first. You see, not only does it mean that you're loyal to Jesus Christ, but I believe implied in that is a repudiation of the pace and the pattern and the preoccupation and the priorities of the world.

We don't live according to their values. We don't live according to their system. We're living for God.

And if you're growing in your knowledge of God, there should be a genuine expression of holiness. And it's going to be characterized by loyalty to Jesus Christ. Get out of the world.

What is it that you're doing that you need to stop doing for no other reason than you belong to Jesus and you reject the world? Yes, we live in the world. We work in the world. We meet and have relationships with

people in the world.

But we are loyal to Jesus. And when our relationship with Jesus Christ contradicts a relationship in some other area or something at our job, then we stand up for Jesus. Even if it costs us the relationship, costs us the job, costs us the promotion, we put Jesus first.

Knowing God involves a genuine expression of holiness. May I ask you, what are you substituting for a genuine expression of holiness? Could you be substituting excuses for sin? Well, God, I just couldn't help it because I had a headache. God, I was raised this way.

I mean, I get this from my mother. She was like that and her mother was like that. And God, you know, if I had more education, I could do this or God, if I had more money, I wouldn't be like that.

Just excuses for sin. God says there's no substitute for a genuine expression of holiness. So out of those characteristics, which one is missing in your life? Purity, humility, complicity to God's word, maturity, unity, loyalty to Jesus Christ.

Lastly, John says if you're giving a genuine, if you're knowing God and you're growing in your relationship with God, then not only do you have a genuine expression of holiness in your life, but lastly, you have a genuine expectance of seeing God face to face. Because if you love someone and you know someone, you want to see them, don't you? I've come home to Montreat just to spend the night last night and I love being at home, but neither one of my parents were there and I still miss seeing them. It's not enough just to be at the house, not enough just to be in the mountains.

I want to see them. And if you know and love God, it's not enough just to be in his house, not enough just to know him by faith. We want to see him face to face.

There should be a genuine expectance of one day seeing him face to face when our faith becomes sight. John says we're living in the last days. Verse 18, dear children, this is the last hour.

And I personally am convinced you and I are living in the last of the last hour. And John gives one evidence that we're living in the last of the last hour. There are many signs in the Bible.

Matthew 24, Jesus gives a whole list of signs that you can use to determine whether or not we're living right before his return or not. That's part of why I say that I believe we are living right before his return. But John gives one evidence and it's the evidence of the antichrists that are in the world.

He says, as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now, many antichrists have come. And this is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they didn't really belong to us.

If they belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But they're going to show that none of them belong to us. And he says that in the last of the last days, they will be antichrists in the world.

Now, Christ means Messiah. Christ means Messiah, the one who is prophesied to bring peace and prosperity in God's rule on earth. And what antichrist do you know in the world today? Those who are promising peace and prosperity apart from Jesus.

Democracy can be an antichrist, can't it? All these Eastern European countries and China, and they all want democracy because they think that will bring peace and prosperity. Communism has been a false Christ. Humanism, thinking that man is the answer, is a false Christ.

Materialism is a false Christ. The New Age movement is a false Christ. And of course, there are some also who are antichrist, meaning anti-Jesus Christ.

And you can see different religions and people in Ayatollah Khomeini is antichrist, Saddam Hussein is antichrist, a Nero was antichrist, a Hitler is antichrist. There have been different world leaders who are antichrist, anti-Jesus Christ, saying they can bring in peace and prosperity some other way than through Jesus Christ. But the evidence, and John is saying in the last of the last days, we're going to see many antichrists in the world.

But he says there's something more. In the last of the last days, you're going to see many antichrists within the church. They've gone out from among us, he says.

And you're going to hear in the pulpits of the churches, in the lecterns of the seminaries, in the classrooms in Sunday school and Bible studies, people who are standing up, calling themselves preachers and Bible teachers and seminary professors who say they're giving out God's word. But what they do when you finish listening to them, they've torn away your faith in God's word. And they will tell you this book is not true, that you can't understand it anyway if you don't know Greek and Hebrew, that there are many contradictions, that there are myths, that it just contains God's word.

I mean, they will go on and on, and when they finish, they have shredded your faith in the very book through which God has revealed himself. They are antichrist, promising peace and prosperity in some way other than knowing God through his word, written and living. And John says, watch out.

You and I are living in the last of the last days, and I'm not going to call names or point fingers, but you open up your ears and you open up your eyes and you will see that many antichrists are in the world. Many antichrists are within the church calling themselves Christians when by their very lips they deny everything they profess to stand for. That's the evidence, the exhortation that he gives us living in the last days.

In verse 24, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. What have you heard from the beginning? You have heard this book from the beginning. In the beginning was the word.

Everything from Genesis to Revelation, make sure it remains in you. How can it remain in you if you don't open it, if you don't read it, if you don't put it in your heart, if you don't put it in your mind? Living in the last days when there'll be many antichrists and they will deceive you, if you don't watch out and make sure that what you have heard from the beginning is remaining in you. If it does, you'll remain in the son and you'll remain in the father.

And then he says, not only be faithful to say in God's word, but to be firm, take your stand on it. Verse 26. I'm writing these things about those who are trying to lead you astray.

There are those in the world today trying to lead you away from God's word to lead you astray. And the last phrase in verse 27 says, just as it has taught you, remain in Christ, stand firm in the word, remain faithful to the word, having done everything else, remain faithful and stand firm living in the last of the last days. John says the evidence is the antichrist are everywhere trying to deceive you and pull you away from the word.

And the exhortation is don't let them be faithful, stand firm, let God's word remain in you, read it, put it in your mind, put it in your heart, meditate on it, apply it to your life, live by it, give it out to others, saturate

yourself in the word of God. Living in the last days, you and I look for his coming. Did you know one out of 20 verses in the New Testament refers to the return of Jesus Christ? And Jesus said in John chapter 14, I'm going to prepare a place for you.

And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again to receive you to myself. And Acts chapter one, verse 11, Jesus has just ascended into heaven and the disciples are all looking up into space. And these two men in white come up and say, John and Peter and Andrew, why are you staring off into space? This same Jesus you saw go up in the clouds is coming back exactly the way you saw him go up.

Meaning he's going to come back from heaven through the clouds in his man's physical body to planet earth. He's coming, he's coming. And if you know God, there will be a genuine expectance living in the last days as you look for his face.

Are you looking? Do you have that expectance? Any day Jesus may come back and you'll be seeing him face to face. John says, you can look for his coming with confidence. Verse 28.

And now dear children continue in him so that when he appears, you may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. When he comes back and you see him face to face, will you be confident? Will you be ashamed? And how can we stand before Jesus Christ face to face confident? I'll tell you how. You can stand confident before him because you know that you have had a genuine experience with Jesus Christ.

You've had a genuine examination of the scriptures. You've saturated yourself in them. You've had a genuine expression.

You're growing in it and you're wholeness and you've had a genuine expectance and you can stand before him confident by God's grace. You haven't done it all right, but to the best of your ability, the direction of your life has been towards him and you've allowed him to control your life and you can be confident. He says you can look for his coming with confidence.

Secondly, with comfort. Chapter three, verse two and verse one. How great is the love the father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God.

That's what we are. And you can look for the return of Jesus Christ with comfort because he's coming for you. You're his child.

I remember one time coming to Montreat. I was going to speak at Ridgecrest and I'd come and mother picked me up at the airport.

I flew that time and she took me to the house and I put my things in my room and I could hear my daddy coming through the house saying and and and I left my things in my room and and I ran down the steps and he says and this is your daddy and I ran into the arms of my father and I had been so excited to see him and then you know it occurred to me my daddy was excited to see me and John says you can look forward to the return of Jesus Christ with confidence and with comfort knowing you're looking for his face and he's looking for yours he's excited to see you and you say and on that day they're going to be thousands of people I mean I don't know how many millions of people that are going to be caught up in the air to meet Jesus when he comes back or maybe when I die there are already so

many people have already died and gone before me I'll be a long line waiting to meet him sort of like you'd be in a reception line and but you know it doesn't work that way he comes for you as though there's only you in all the world when I went to the beach we went to the beach for Easter and one night three days were rainy one day was nice and on that one nice day the the moon was coming up over the water and you could walk out on the beach and as I stood there on the beach there was a moonbeam that came across the water from the moon directly to me my husband was down the beach a little way and he looked at the moon and there was a moonbeam that went from the moon right to him and if you're going on down the beach there's a moonbeam that goes from the moon down to that person and every

person standing on the beach it was though there was a moonbeam coming just for them and when Jesus comes back you can look forward with the comfort of knowing you're his child and he's coming back just for you he says I will come back to receive you to myself that is a personal bridegroom coming for his bride as though he was coming for no one but you John says you can look for his coming with confidence with comfort with conviction verse 2 dear friend now we're children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known but we do know that when he appears we're going to be like him for we shall see him as he is do you ever get tired of sinning tired of the struggle with sin just wanting to be free of the struggle and to be like Jesus and you ever wonder if that will ever be possible

maybe you've sinned in the same way for the 50th time and you're you're even embarrassed to come back to the cross because lord I've done this 50 times this week and and I'm so sorry and I'm embarrassed and I'm ashamed and and I just look forward to the day when I stand before Jesus and he completes in me that which was begun at my salvation and you know I'm deeply convinced from scripture that as I say in his word and as I walk in the light and I'm kneeling at the cross that he is going to complete in me what he's begun and when I see him I'm going to be like him believe it or not I'm going to be like Jesus and other people will be able to see Jesus in me and I'm deeply convinced that what he has begun he will also complete and lastly I can look for his coming with a commitment to live

every moment of my life as though it were my last verse 3 everyone who has the hope of seeing Jesus purifies herself just as he is pure now how does the hope of seeing Jesus purify yourself let me ask you if you thought Jesus was coming in five minutes what would you do differently what would you have done differently this morning if you thought all of life would be over and you would be standing face to face before him would you have gotten up this morning for a prayer time would you have witnessed to your neighbor would you not have lost your temper with your toddler would you have done something else he's been after you to do put that sin out of your life put that habit into your life that he's wanting you to establish do you see if you live every moment as though it's your last as

though you're going to see him anytime then it purifies your life some things are going to go out and some things are going to come in because you want to live your life rightly before him I do not want Jesus to come back and catch me in sin I do not want Jesus to come back and catch me in indifference I do not want Jesus to come back and catch me sleeping when I should be praying or losing my temper when I should be giving out a word of encouragement or silent when I should be giving out a witness I want him to come back and find me watching and ready for his return those who are growing in their knowledge of God have a genuine expectance living in the last days as they look for his return what are you substituting for a genuine expectance of seeing him are you substituting fear and

you're afraid if Jesus were to come back today and I'm just speaking for yourself don't think of your family because I know many of us are afraid for a husband or children who don't know Jesus I mean just for you

if there was nobody else that you were responsible for just for you if you thought Jesus was coming for you today are you afraid and if you're afraid and if that doesn't create a genuine expectance in your heart would you examine why are you afraid is it because there is something in your life that's not pleasing to him he would come back and catch you in something that's not right could it be that you would stand before him on that day saying lord lord I think I know you but really I just knew about you I never established a personal relationship with you and if that's the

reason for your fear I'm going to challenge you this morning to do something to counteract that fear by making a commitment to Jesus Christ as your savior this morning so at least you take care of that reason for fear knowing that you know God because you understand he may not come back today he may not come back for two thousand more years but dear friend when you die you're going to be standing before him you will see him face to face and you may die sooner than you think god forbid I could go home this afternoon and die in a car accident you could die suddenly somebody be diagnosed with cancer or some other heart disease or and suddenly your life is taken and you're standing before God and you go into all eternity are you ready do you have a genuine expectance that no matter when that

time comes you're looking for his face and he's looking for you because you belong to him or are you afraid you're not sure you belong to him my challenge to you this morning make sure do you know God do you really know God or do you simply know about him would you examine your relationship with him do you have a genuine experience with Jesus Christ that's personal powerful purposeful and do you have a genuine examination of scripture every day through which you're knowing the character of God and having communion with God and is there a genuine expression of holiness in your life therefore you can have a genuine expectance living in the last days looking for his face would you choose to know God in a relationship that God acknowledges and if you already know you have a relationship like

that would you choose to grow in your knowledge of God

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