

1st John 5:2-3 Jesus Command Us to Love

John affirms that our love for God and our love for other Christians is connected to obedience to His commands. John is not saying that our works in obedience to God's Word are what makes us Children of God, but that true obedience to God's Word is only possible through the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and so obedience provides proof of this work of the Holy Spirit within us. It is God who enables us to obey, and God providing the change in our hearts by the indwelling Holy Spirit, which then provides the outward proof of obedience.

John is saying that the best way to know that we love God, and His children is to get about the business of serving our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, because they are God's children! We learn the depth of our own love for each other while we're serving each other! It's His love that we're pouring out.

So how do we do this? The first step to serving one another is to first listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit; John 14:26 **26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and remind you of all that I said to you** He will guide us, but we must let Him.

Proverbs 3:5-6 **5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.** We're not always going to know what to do, but God does, and He will reveal His will through the Holy Spirit.

We must be obedient from the heart. Rom 6:17 says **17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were entrusted,** We obey, not from the head, agreeing intellectually that we *should* obey, but from the heart.

In scripture, the heart is the center of who we are as a person, our control center for the desire, emotions, moral center, intellect and will. The most important things in life happen in the heart. That's why we must **"watch over [y]our heart with all diligence"** (prov 4:23). This is where our obedience to God is rooted in love. Indeed, as Paul continues in Romans 6:18 **18 and after being freed from sin, you became slaves to righteousness.** For the Christian, obedience IS freedom—it's freedom NOT to sin, made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. Seeking after God and His ways that brings true freedom from the bondage of sin 2 Cor 3:17 **Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.** We can walk in freedom, if we are walking in the Light, just as Jesus is in the light, obeying God. Psalm 119:45 **And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.**

And it is freedom to serve one another in love. Paul writes in Galatians 5:13 which says, **13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** We are to freely choose to serve one another, denying our sinful flesh in order to step outside ourselves, and not be pulled back into our old habits and selfish ways. Yes, we have freedom in Christ, but it's freedom NOT to sin that we didn't have before we knew Him. It's not freedom to do whatever our flesh wants, because that will only bring hurt and harm to us, and those we love. Christ had died for us so that we are free so that they may be able to serve our brothers and sisters in love!

Paul teaches that we use our Spiritual gifts to serve one another in love 1 Cor 12:7 **7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.** Being one who serves is a part of what it means to be a Christ-follower. God wants us to, through the empowerment of His Holy Spirit, follow His command from Isaiah 1:17, **"Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow."** As we follow Him, we are called to serve not only the people we see in our daily lives but look for opportunities to serve the oppressed, orphaned, widows, and seek the cause of justice whenever we have the chance, and especially to meet the needs of the saints. God has equipped us specifically for the purpose of doing His will to serve one another! Ephesians 2:10 **10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.** So let's walk in them, and do God's will.

We must serve in the context of community. Galatians 5 says to “serve one another in love;” the “one another” implies that service should happen in the context of a community. Hebrews 10:24-25 **“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.** It’s our job as a body of believers to be connected to one another, loving one another, and spurring each other on to do the good work that God has for us!

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments;

1st John 2:11 **11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we are to love one another;** John really wants us to know that loving one another with the love of Christ has always been God’s expectation of us. And, in particular, John is focusing on Jesus’ command in John 13:34 **34 I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another.** And the again in **John 15:17 This I command you, that you love one another.**

We are to love with the love of Christ, because it is God’s will for our lives. It is so good for us, because it transforms us into the image of Jesus, and it is so good for the one being served, because it is meeting their needs, and it is so good for the observing unbelievers, because it provides evidence to them that in Jesus they, and the rest of the hurting world can find real love. But above all, we have been commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ to love! And we need to obey the word of God. To abide in Jesus is to keep His Word, and we can only do this out of love for Jesus. John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, **“If anyone loves Me, he will follow My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him.** We demonstrate love for God when we keep His commandments in the Word of God. This fellowship with Jesus, fellowship with God is based on loving Jesus and following His Word, because God is light, and to follow Him, we must walk as Jesus walked, in obedience to the light. The keeping of God’s commandments characterizes the person who loves God. It is persistent obedience in the face of temptations, trials, or whatever comes. It is intentionally obeying God’s commandments, even when we’d rather do whatever we want in our flesh. Obedience, especially intentional, persistent obedience, is the best way one says to God, “I love You.”

“And, His commandments are not burdensome.”

His commandments are not burdensome, they are not something that we struggle under, like a great weight, just pushing ourselves to go forward. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30 **28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is comfortable, and My burden is light.”** What He asks of us, in His teaching is filled with love, joy and peace. He gives us strength for the burden through the power of the Holy Spirit! And if one of His most important teachings, and His One commandment to us was to love one another, even as He has loved us, then it cannot be that this will be a great burden to us. The Holy Spirit urges us to walk continually in love for one another. We all need to be encouraged in this area. Paul prays for the Thessalonian church in 1 Thessalonians 3:12 **and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you;** He encourages them that this is one of the great lessons that God is trying to teach them in 1 Thessalonians 4:9 **Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;** This is a fundamental lesson of the Gospel, love for Jesus, and love for those who have put their trust in Him. And, it calls us to ACTION in helping one another, and strengthening one another in the faith. Just like Jesus told Peter to strengthen his brethren, Paul tells the Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 **Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.**