

Real Disciples (10): Life in the Son

(1 John 5:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. When in college, we attended a little country church where a friend preached
 - 1. In was a place where everyone knew everyone—in fact, they were related!
 - a. There were 2 extended families, and they intermarried at several points
 - b. So if you offend one person, pretty soon the whole church is miffed!
 - c. We were there to encourage my friend; it turned out, he needed a lot!
 - 2. He was teaching an adult class on Book of Revelation (old GA quarterly)
 - a. He did a good job patiently working thru a book that is a bit daunting
 - b. Ten weeks into study he asked, “*So, does anyone have any questions?*”
 - c. Big Mistake! “*I haven’t understood any this; can we just study Acts?*”
- B. So, we’re 10 weeks into our study of “*Real Disciples*” from 1 John
 - 1. *So, does anyone have a question?* It’s hard to keep focused on message
 - a. We can sometimes use the Bible as if it were the encyclopedia.
 - b. You don’t read encyclopedia; you look through it for information.
 - c. 1 John isn’t encyclopedia but a letter; it has a theme, purpose & message.
 - 2. So from time to time we need to go back and review that message
 - a. Of course you can overdo that—do so much review that it is tedious
 - 1) A friend taught a 13-week class on Philemon (*1 chapter, 25 verses*)
 - 2) He covered 5 verses and spent 30 minutes the next week on review
 - b. Fortunately, John builds in his own review lesson for us in 1 John
- C. 1 John was written to a church that was being confused by false teachers
 - 1. From what John says, the false teachers looked a lot like later Gnostics
 - a. They denied Jesus came in the flesh and that obedience was important
 - b. They flaunted spiritual superiority and ignored prime directive of love
 - 2. John stresses 3 spiritual points—faith in Jesus, obedience and love others
 - a. The book alternates between those themes—these make true disciples
 - b. John brings these three together in our text in review (**1 John 5:1-5**)

II. Who Are Real Disciples

A. **First**, real disciples are those who believe that Jesus is the Christ (**5:1**)

1. Throughout his book, John ties **real discipleship** to **real faith** in Jesus
 - a. He began by stressing reality of his coming—saw, heard, touched (**1:1**)
 - b. Our fellowship with God/others is based on the reality of that faith (**1:3**)
 - c. To claim fellowship but deny that Christ came is to be antichrist (**2:22**)
 - d. Faith in coming of Christ separates the true and false disciples (**4:2-3**)
2. As John sums up his point about real disciples, his first stop is FAITH.
 - a. Skeptics and unbelievers agree there are good things in Christianity.
 - 1) Hindu and Buddhists revere Jesus as a great teacher and wise man.
 - 2) Muslims honor Jesus above any other man other than Mohammed.
 - 3) Humanists appreciate Jesus emphasis on justice and the poor.
 - b. While others may appreciate Jesus, Christians center their faith in Him
 - 1) Christianity is Christ, and Christians believe in Jesus above all things
 - 2) Real disciples have a faith centered in His death and resurrection
3. John begins his summary of “*Who is a real disciple*” by stressing faith

B. **Second**, real disciples are those who love other believers (**5:2**)

1. We suggested last week that we know John as “*the apostle of love*”
 - a. He writes “*love one another*” 5 times in his gospel and 7 in his epistles
 - b. In fact, John uses the word “*love*” 46 times in 105 verses in 1 John
2. Love is essential nature of God—it comes from God & God is love (**4:7-8**)
 - a. This command to “*love one another*” is an old and new command (**2:7-8**)
 - 1) Old command because we have it from the beginning of the gospel
 - 2) New because we must love each other in a new way—as he loved us
 - b. That love is not a love of words, but a love that sacrifices (**1 Jn 3:16**)
3. I was in trouble with praise team— sung “*Greatest Commands*” 3x in a row
 - a. Bit the words are directly from 1 John; aren’t many love songs in book
(*Maybe we could try the old Gaither song sometime, “Getting Use to Family of God”*)
 - b. But then John sings the same song over and over— 46 choruses of “love”
 - c. Over and over again he keeps coming back to the same point-- LOVE

- C. **Third**, real disciples are those who obey the commands of God (**5:3**)
1. John says that the reason that he writes is that we not sin (**2:1**)
 - a. Sure, he goes on to talk about Jesus as our Advocate with the Father
 - b. But in doing so, he also stress the importance of doing what is right
 - 1) The one who does what is right is born of God (**2:29**)
 - 2) The one who does what is right is (**3:7-8**)
 2. Do we see the emphasis on love and obedience as mutually exclusive?
 - a. Two stereotypes of churches—left and right, liberal and conservative
 - 1) One stresses love— loves everyone and accepts anything—no rules
 - 2) One stresses obeying— enforces rules, stresses expectation—no love
 - b. John wouldn't be a member of either of those churches—he stresses both
 - 1) Disciples love one others and extend God's love outward to everyone
 - 2) Disciples also obey and lovingly hold one another to God's standards
 3. **Question:** Is obeying God's commands really not a burden? *That depends*
 - a. Compared to carrying our own sin/guilt burden—obedience is no burden
 - 1) Jesus said yoke was easy and burden light, not that he had neither.
 - 2) John doesn't say God never commands us to do things that are hard
 - b. But as we are transformed by faith and love, the burden is transformed.
 - c. The more we grow in faith and love, the less a burden is obedience.
 - d. But even when it is difficult, discipleship still demands our obedience
- D. **Finally**, John comes back to faith— the victory that overcomes world (**5:4-5**)
1. John has already used this language of overcoming the world (**1 John 4:4**)
 - a. True disciples are from God; these false teachers (antichrists) are not
 - 1) Obviously, John is writing to help the church overcome the threat
 - 2) He says that had **already** overcome the threat if they maintained faith
 - b. Power wasn't them, but it was in them, a greater power than in the world
 2. This “*overcoming*” doesn't mean that we will have smooth sailing thru life
 - a. Jesus promises that in the world we will have troubles (**John 16:33**)
 - b. Our peace isn't because we have no trouble— Jesus overcame world
 3. So our victory over the world is because we have faith in Jesus

III. Conclusion

- A. Notice how these 3 characteristics of discipleship blend from one into next.
1. **Verse 1** starts speaking about faith, but at the end transitions to love.
 - a. **Verse 2**, speaks of love, but by the end his has moved on to obedience.
 - b. **Verses 3-4** stress the importance of obedience to God’s commands.
 - c. Before **verse 4** is over, John has rotated around to stressing faith again.
 2. So what makes a true disciple? Faith in Jesus, loving others and obeying
 - a. At face value, John points us to what Swindoll calls “*Simple Faith*”
 - b. The key to living as a true disciple is found in faith, love and obedience
 - 1) False teachers had a complicated, convoluted philosophic theology
 - 2) Maybe sometime we want to focus complex systems of theology
 - c. God is complex, but what holds stresses is simple—believe, love, obey
- B. The language of the “*steps of salvation*” is very common to most of us
1. Many people use the general but disagree on the exact nature of the steps
 - a. Most of us were taught **5 steps**—hear, believe, repent, confess, baptism.
(Originally—believe, repent, confess, baptized, receive gift of the Holy Spirit)
 - b. If you Google “*steps to salvation*,” the first page listed has only **4 steps**.
(So which one of the five steps do you suppose gets left off this list?)
 - c. A popular graphic poster entitled “*Steps of Salvation*” lists **12 steps**.
(Twelve is a good Bible number; fortunate it wasn’t the 144,000 steps)
 2. The imagery of steps implies completed process (*step 1-2-3 and cha-cha-cha*)
 - a. It also implies a series of tasks we accomplish or ladder than we climb.
 - b. If we aren’t careful, we will see salvation as defined by steps we take
- C. But John’s summary of discipleship is a **cycle** more than **series of steps**.
1. We live in an **ongoing process** of believing, loving and obeying God
 - a. The point is not “*getting saved*” as the top rung on a salvation ladder
 - b. The point is to live in an ongoing and growing relationship with God.
 2. We never climb so high that we arrive at the top— we continue to OBEY
 - a. We never despair that we aren’t good enough— we continue to TRUST
 - b. We never look down on other who struggle—we continue to LOVE
 3. It is to this life of faith, love and obedience that we invite you today.