



## **Letters of Love**

**#10 Knowing**

**June 10, 2018**

**Courage Church, Detroit, MI**

**scriptures:** 1 John 3:19-24,  
Matthew 1:25, Psalm 103:12,  
Isaiah 1:18, Galatians 2:11,  
Matthew 5:23, Matthew  
22:34-40, Jeremiah 22:16,  
Matthew 7

When we first decided to do this sermon series on the three letters of the Apostle John, I read through these 3 epistles several times in a row and tried to find things that stuck out to me, that hadn't stuck out to me in past readings... and I make little markings, underlines or highlight those things, and throughout all of my studies of the entire book, I study it keeping in the back of my mind, these specific things that stuck out to me as I read the whole letter as one entire piece.

then, each week when I get to a specific passage, I read that passage over and over and over and usually find several *more* things that stick out to me, that hadn't really stuck out to me before. And I dive in, and explore it, and wrestle with it, and read what other people say *about it*, and seek the Holy Spirit about what He has for our community specifically loaded into it...

That is sort of my process when going through an entire book of the Bible like this.

and I have to tell you, the passage we are about to read REALLY STUCK OUT TO ME, early on, as I began studying for this series. It had never stuck out to me before, but it really stuck out to me in these last couple of months... And so I have very much anticipated getting to a more in depth study on this particular passage... The same is true for the second section of chapter 5 which we will look at in a few weeks... there are things that are sticking out to me and I am just SO excited to study them.

But I wanted to say all that... Because I want you to know that, whether I am teaching, or Dawn is teaching or Austin or Chris or my Dad... whether you come to a teaching at Equip or a teaching on a Sunday morning...

we are wrestling with this all week long leading up to our time with you. In some instances by the time a sermon gets to you we have been thinking on it and praying about it AND TALKING ABOUT IT and studying it for months.

We take these few sacred moments where we are up here and have the honor of teaching the word of God... we take it SO SERIOUSLY, because we take the Word of God seriously. and we get excited to teach it, and are excited when you have questions about it...

and we are excited when you have insights about it and when we leave here talking about it...

And this week I was just reassured even more about our Core Value of "Conversation" when I was studying this... and the importance of being open to what the Spirit is saying... Because as I was studying this passage, I read it over several times thinking that it was saying one thing, and now, after really diving in and studying it, I realize it is saying something different.

I did not realize just HOW MUCH of a continuation of last weeks passage this passage really is...

Last week was likely one of the hardest messages for a lot of us to hear... because its one of the hardest scriptures in the entire Bible to READ.

What it says basically strips away any excuses we may try and come up, with to justify us living well, while others are hurting and broken and poor and can't even eat. It gives no room whatsoever for us seeing needs that we can meet, and then ignoring those needs... It gives no room at all, for a life that does not function with LOVE being the centerpiece.

and John just continues with that, here.

So lets look at 1 John 3:19-24.

By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And **this is his commandment**, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

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Last week we really began a series of sections, and all of them start the same...

1 John 3:16 says “by this we know LOVE... That Christ laid down his life for us”

today’s passage, 1 John 3:19 starts by saying: “by this we know TRUTH”

which we all want... nobody wants to limp through this life thinking they are okay, when in reality the truth doesn’t live in them... nobody wants to think they KNOW the right thing, when in reality, they don’t know it at all.

Well, John is about to show us HOW WE CAN BE ASSURED THAT WE KNOW TRUTH AND ARE LIVING TRUTH.

next weeks passage starts by saying “by this we know that he abides in us... by the Spirit”

then 1 John 4:13 says it the other way “by this we know that WE ABIDE IN HIM...”

and finally, 1 John 5:2 "By this we know that we love the children of God..."

So there is something very significant that John is getting at with this phrase “BY THIS WE KNOW.”

John really wants us “to know...” he wants us to be *assured*... he wants us to have *confidence*.

This word “know” is the Greek word *ginōskō* (gē-nō'-skō)

and *ginōskō* means: to know, to understand... knowing... understanding.

that seems obvious. “know” is a pretty good translation.

but to show you the depth of “knowing” this word refers to, *ginōskō* (gē-nō'-skō) was actually a Hebrew idiom for sex between a man and a woman.

For example, in Matthew 1 when the Virgin Mary conceives the baby Jesus through the Holy Spirit... it says that after the angel visits Joseph and confirms to him that the baby was in fact from the Holy Spirit, and that Mary did not cheat on Joseph, the Bible said that Joseph decided to move ahead with marrying Mary. but then it said:

But He KNEW HER NOT, until after Jesus was born. He *ginōskō* (gē-nō'-skō) her not, until after she had delivered the baby. (Mathew 1:25)

Last week we mentioned briefly, that, as Christians, we view sex as absolutely sacred, designed exclusively for marriage... it is designed to be that “pinnacle of assurance,” that this person has given all of themselves to me. Their whole life. Their whole being. There is nobody else.

Which is part of the reason that it can be so destructive when it happens outside of the way that God intended it.

and though the concept and the seriousness of marriage has been so corrupted, especially in our society today, and a lot of people live very insecure and unassured lives even when it comes to their spouses (which is tragic)... thats NOT the way that it was intended to be.

The Bible describes marriage as two becoming ONE FLESH. Meaning “I am one with that person now, and forever... there is NO OTHER...” and when you reach that point in your relationship... it SHOULD come with it ASSURANCE. SECURITY.

not questioning, and wavering... and wondering if this person is for you... or if this person is with you... or if this person will be there when you wake up.

That is why when we say our vows we say "TIL DEATH DO US PART."

There is not supposed to be DOUBT in a person, as to if the person that they are married to is truly committed to them.

That is what it means to "KNOW" - its not an idea. Its as concrete as it gets.

- we talked last week about that deep down feeling, the King James describes as your "bowels of compassion" - the feeling that says "I just know that I know..."

We all know that knowing about a person is very different from KNOWING a person. Knowledge about God is great, but to actually KNOW GOD is something different entirely. And the type of "knowing" that John is referring to here is one that is not just in your head. It is one that demands action. It demands that you take a step.

Let me give you another example... and please, I by NO MEANS am giving anyone financial advice here... don't take it as that.

but a couple of weeks ago I was having lunch with a friend, and he told me that a few years ago he had purchased a handful of bitcoins for about 100 dollars a piece. He said he had researched the technology for a long time, and he felt confident in it...

for those of you who are unfamiliar with bitcoin, it is what is called a "digital currency" or a "crypto-currency" - and the concept has taken off quite a bit, but there are still tons of things that at least I don't have any idea how they work or why it is considered valuable... but as of yesterday one coin was worth about \$7,500 dollars...

but the price changes dramatically, often, so most investors advise against buying it, because there is no way of knowing.

Today, if you wanted to buy a whole coin, it would cost \$7500 dollars... tomorrow it could be a thousand dollars cheaper, or three thousand dollars more expensive.

And most people don't have that type of confidence, even IF we had that kind of money... in something that we can't even see.

But today... right now, if you had even 100 dollars and the opportunity to go back in time five years and buy a bitcoin for 100 dollars, it would be crazy to NOT do that.

But I remember reading about bitcoin years ago, saying "IT IS INSANE that people are paying 100 dollars per coin for this invisible, digital, what I called "fake money"

I had no confidence in it. I didn't know. And because of that, I, like most of the world, missed out.

So I am looking at it now thinking, I would NEVER pay \$7,500 for one invisible coin...

I AM SAYING THE SAME THING...

and some say I am right, and it would be nuts, and others think its still cheap compared to what it will be... BUT I AM STILL DEBILITATED BY THE SAME MINDSET REGARDING IT.

because that is how our minds work. When we doubt something... when we are not SURE of something... there will always be a reason to keep us UNSURE ABOUT THAT THING, that AT SOME POINT we will have to overcome if we want to experience what that thing may have for us.

For a lot of people it is tithing. They are always saying that life is so tight, they are always saying that they can't understand why things won't change for them, but at the same time they can't bring themselves to tithe, and just CAN'T get their minds around KNOWING that God promises to take care of them, IF they take care of His church. Its the only thing in the Bible that he

says “TEST ME ON THIS!” If there has ever been a guarantee in the Bible for God taking care of you financially IF you do something, it is tithing.

But the road block for many on that, is their own bills, that seem more powerful than God when you try to line your reality up with what God says is possible for your life. When we DOUBT what God is capable of, we miss out on what He wants to do in our lives.

There is always something to block us from the truth.

And here, the writer John is saying that when it comes to your relationship with Jesus... when it comes to eternity... when it comes to your future, when it comes to your life NOW...

“I WANT YOU TO KNOW! I don’t want you to doubt... I don’t want you to question... I WANT YOU TO KNOW that you have the truth.”

But you have to remember what he said in the section before... he shared a lot of truth there... he showed us that love has to be an action... and if you think that bitcoin has had a huge return, I am telling you that in the scope of eternity...

the return will be thousands/fold whatever you invest in this life into other people. See, we say this all the time, but **GENEROSITY IS THE CURRENCY OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.** and yet we hold what is in our hands because we think that we need it, but the Bible tells us that if we give it away it will always return, and **WE ARE STORING UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN.**

and here John says “how do you know? How do you live with assurance? its simple... do you keep his commandments?”

but watch this... I will give you the end in the Beginning and we will circle back to it again at the end... Look at what John says in verse 23, we just read it:

And **this is his commandment**, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

John says that IF WE KEEP THIS... this two fold commandment, then we know.

Assurance of who you are in Christ is not just something you “know (in your head, your knowledge)” it is something you KNOW... your whole being... it is transformational and it has to do with every area of your life.

John is saying that the GOSPEL is something that is both DEEP DOWN INSIDE OF US, and FLOWING OUT OF US.

we will look at that line again in a couple of minutes but I think that is crucial in understanding the way that John is framing this idea of KNOWING.

okay, now... lets look back at verse 20 and 21:

“for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;”

Don't raise your hands or anything like that, but just think about this...

how many of you would say that you often feel like your heart condemns you?

Most of you, without really even knowing what *this* (passage) means, would likely say... yes.

My heart does condemn me.

Like, I KNOW, (knowledge)... I GET IT in my head what it means to know God... what it means to know love... what it means to know TRUTH...

But I don't know that that... is... me.

Typically in life, the things that make our hearts heaviest in regards to our own lives, are the mistakes of our past...

the *inactions*... the times that we FAILED TO ACT...



AND the sinful actions that we HAVE TAKEN... that our hearts won't forget about even though Jesus forgave us of them, and He died FOR THEM...

Guilt plays a very central role in the debilitation of the follower of Jesus Christ. It just does. If Satan can take you back to that moment where you were at your lowest... and he can get you to live in that place... you will never, ever be who you are called to be.

he wants to use your worst moment as your defining moment...

He wants to convince you that THAT ONE MISTAKE has set the trajectory of your entire life...

and IF YOU BUY INTO *THAT*, THEN IT WILL.

but it is a lie.

It is a lie, and even if this morning your heart has wrapped around that lie... and it has told you that you will never be anything different than the person you were yesterday... even if you have been convinced that your net worth can be summed up in the mistakes you made five years ago...

I want to tell you that God is bigger than our hearts, and the lies that our hearts sometimes believe. And there is a way out of that this morning, and John shows us what it is.

And we are going to dive more into that *in a moment*.

But first, I want to make sure that you understand something VERY IMPORTANT.

There is a very big difference between CONVICTION and GUILT.

Guilt reminds you of the things that you HAVE DONE...

It even reminds you of the THINGS THAT YOU THOUGHT ABOUT DOING. (Like, what kind of a person would even *think* things like that?)

and will rot away your heart and your soul and your mind if you let it, and it is the opposite of the Gospel of Jesus Christ....

It is from Satan, the Father of all lies...

Guilt and condemnation in your heart is a lie.

Not because you are innocent, because in a courtroom setting you would surely be found guilty... but Jesus Christ, our advocate, took your punishment... He washed your sins as far as the East is from the West (Psalm 103:12), "though our sins be a like scarlet, He makes them white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall become like wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

Guilt will cause you to keep your Bible closed because you are afraid of what it will tell you when you open it up.

Conviction, on the other hand, IS WHAT YOU WILL FEEL IF YOU DO OPEN IT UP... and you let yourself encounter the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conviction, IF YOU LISTEN TO IT... will prevent you from making the same mistake AGAIN... and again and again and again.

and it is from The Holy Spirit.

Reminders of your past are from Satan.

Cautions about your future are from the Holy Spirit. .

In John 16, Jesus says that He is leaving, and He is sending the Holy Spirit, and in verse 7, He calls the Holy Spirit the COMFORTER... then in verse 8 it says that the Spirit will CONVICT THE WORLD OF ITS SINS..

which quite frankly, doesn't sound very comforting...

until you realize that the Holy Spirit is a person who LIVES INSIDE OF YOU... and to convict in the Greek means "to bring to light" - and if you

don't have anything that will bring to light the problem areas of your life, how will you ever change?

Personal conviction... Spirit lead conviction, is different from being "convicted of a crime" -

The Holy Spirit is NOT here to PUNISH YOU...  
The Holy Spirit is here to HELP YOU.

But I think sometimes we read these words and we get freaked out by them... conviction... condemn... things like that...

But John, in today's passage is trying to get something very different across than condemnation the way that we typically think of condemnation.

But we have to look closely at this word "condemn"

"IF OUR HEARTS CONDEMN US."

Throughout the Bible, you get words that we translate as condemn quite often...

The most common one of them being "*katakrinō*" - The Apostle Paul uses this word several times, mostly in Romans and also once in 1 Corinthians. James uses it. The writer of Hebrews uses it.

Jesus himself uses it several times, for example: when He is talking about the sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:41) and He says that the people of Nineveh REPENTED, and therefore they were saved, and they will rise up and condemn *this* generation who is even more evil, and more importantly... UNREPENTANT.

Those who are unrepentant will be condemned.

Perhaps the most significant time you get "*katakrinō*" out of the mouth of Jesus is in Mark's version of the Great Commission... in Mark 16:16 Jesus says:

(15, 16) “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but **whoever does not believe will be condemned** (*katakrinō*).”

This word means EXACTLY what you think it would mean. It means to be “judged, and found worthy of punishment.” Something that none of us want... something that the only way to avoid is to believe in the saving grace of Jesus... the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Notice that, the ones who DO NOT BELIEVE will be condemned.

So that is the word usually translated as “condemned” (*katakrinō*)- but John, here in his epistle chooses a different Greek word.

Its a similar word, but it is DIFFERENT.

Because John is saying something DIFFERENT.

John chooses the word: *kataginōskō* (kā-tā-gē-nō'-skō) - a word that is only used in two different instances in the entire Bible. John uses it here twice, and Paul uses it ONE TIME. Thats it.

Paul uses it in Galatians 2:11 when he is talking about how he confronted Peter, because Peter was not treating the Gentiles properly... Peter at one point was eating with the Gentiles, which he SHOULD BE DOING... but he ate with them only until he saw other Jews coming, and then he stopped eating with them because he was afraid of what the Jews would say.

There was a HUGE struggle within the early church as to just how much of the Jewish tradition the Gentiles had to take on in order to become Christians...

And The Apostle Paul said NONE. - He basically said “you accept Jesus into your heart, you LET HIM TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE... we don't heap anything burdensome on you, and yet we believe that Jesus will do a miracle work in your life and the things that are inside of you that need to go away, the closer you get to Jesus, the less you will do those things.”

But Peter and others were saying something different... they were saying the Gentiles had to be circumcised, and they had to adhere to all of the laws, even the ones that didn't make sense for them."

And so Paul here in Galatians says "I confronted Peter, because he stood condemned." *kataginōskō* - this word that Paul uses ONLY ONCE in all of his writings.

Obviously Paul was not saying that Peter was being condemned, as in, this is the end... he is getting locked up, the key is getting thrown away. He is going to hell... The final verdict is in...

no... Peter was the head of the entire church... but even the head of the entire church can get things wrong, and when he does get something wrong, it must be brought to light... and that is what Paul was doing.

BUT NOTICE, before I explain this word... that the ONE time that Paul uses this word, he is calling Peter out ON THE WAY THAT PETER WAS TREATING OTHER PEOPLE.

Now, back to 1 John...

remember last week?

The ENTIRE passage that we read leading up to this was all about what?

How you are treating other people... treating strangers... treating broken people... treating people who have less than you do... treating people who are different than you are...

100% of the times that this word is used in the Bible, it is right in the center of texts about how we treat each other.

*kataginōskō* comes from two Greek words, the first, not surprisingly being *kata*.

*kata* is a Greek word used hundreds of times in the Bible with various usages, and in 58 of those places it is translated as “AGAINST” which is the closest use of the word here, which will make sense in a minute.

Matthew 5:23 “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something **against** (*kata*) you, leave your gift there before the altar and go”

again, its how we relate to people... reconcile with your brother, before you bring your gift to God...

but watch this... the other word used to form *kataginōskō* is.....

*ginōskō* - The word from earlier. “To know.”

to understand... knowing... understanding.

So when the words come together they form the word *kataginōskō*

“against knowing”

The opposite of knowing. Or maybe you could say it like this:

Not knowing...

When your hearts **do not know**...

which another way of saying “not knowing” is you could even say: confused.

That actually makes a lot of sense as to why that is the one and only time that Paul uses that word in the entire Bible, when he is talking to Peter...

what he is essentially saying is:

Peter stood against knowing... He had made a decision NOT UNDERSTANDING... He made a bad decision, but he was *confused*.

Religion, tradition, and what other people thought of him, clouded him from living out in that moment, the life he was called to.

and likewise here... especially to the ones who were NOT loving people in deed and in truth, and they weren't experiencing the affirmation that comes every time you help another person and you tangibly can SEE what the Gospel looks like... they were confused... they were getting it wrong.

and that type of a selfish lifestyle is sure to lead to all sorts of crisis' of faith.

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You see, here... in 1 John 3... I found this to be fascinating in helping us grasp this:

When John says "by this you KNOW" - "know" there is actually written in the *future tense*, and the commentators mostly agree that what is happening here, is he is writing in *anticipation* of when some of his church members are going to have some sort of a crisis of faith... something that will cause them to doubt... something that will cause them to be confused...

and we know by the rest of the letter, that tons of false teachers had crept in... tons of people were saying things that were wrong... tons of people were teaching things that were anti-christ...

and so it would not come as a surprise that some of the people here may have begun to question whether or not they are saved...

It is very clear that many of those John was writing to, were "confused."

So here he says:

if your hearts are confused, and you aren't sure if you are in right standing with God... this is how you know... if you keep HIS COMMANDMENT... which if you think "ten commandments" its likely that your heart will still be confused as to where you stand... PROBABLY MORE CONFUSED.. but its not talking about that...

in fact, this may be the place that John is MOST CLEAR as to what His commandment is... Look one more time at verse 23:

And **this is his commandment**, that we *believe* in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and *love one another*, just as he has commanded us.

THIS IS THE GREAT COMMANDMENT. That's all John is doing, is taking us back there to what Jesus said was most important.

Ladies and gentlemen I am here to tell you that your heart can not truly condemn you. Your heart CAN confuse you. Your heart can lie to you. Your heart can tell you that you are not good enough, it can even tell you that what Jesus did for you was not good enough...

it can remind you of the things that you have broken in this life that can not be pieced back together...

your heart can even tell you that you are guilty...

but it can NOT issue that final verdict, that says you are condemned.

Because God is greater than our hearts. And no matter what lies today your heart has wrapped around it, this writer tells us that it is not too big for Jesus. It tells us that Jesus Himself stands in opposition to that condemnation...

and that He died to overturn any guilty charge that you have been given, as long as you BELIEVE IN HIM...

John makes it so clear... love Jesus, and your love for Jesus will transform your life. Don't let your life, your actions, your mistakes, your past... don't let that debilitate the role that God has for you today because there is a world out there that is DYING WITHOUT JESUS... and it needs you to be Salt and the be Light so that it can encounter Jesus.

John makes it so clear... JESUS' COMMANDMENTS ARE SIMPLE...

1. Believe in the name of Jesus.



## 2. Love one another.

Sounds an awful lot like what Jesus said in the Great Commandment (Matt. 22) Its almost as if John is writing to remind us of what Jesus already told us.

And again, we have to realize that this is a progression. John just got done telling us that if you see the world in need, and you have what it takes to help, and you don't... don't let your heart deceive you into believing that you are okay... because thats a good indication that you AREN'T okay.

Then here in the next verse, he gives us the test...

This is the sign... This is how you know... do you care about others? Since Jesus came into your life, are you at least moving in this direction? Are you becoming more loving? Is generosity becoming more important to you?

Generosity is so important to the Gospel because it is HOW WE REFLECT THE GOSPEL in our world. and just like everything, it has always been this way...

The love of God has always been evident, and it always works through people to demonstrate it to other people.

turn your Bibles back with me all the way to the book of the Prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah 22:16... one day I want to teach on this entire section, but there is one line in there that really stands out above all others... its the only time in the Bible when God himself clearly just says "this is what it means to know me" - we all want to know God... and this is what it says:

**"He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? declares the Lord."**

Is not this what it means to know me? To judge the cause of the poor and the needy. Another translation says "he plead the cause" - He was an advocate for the poor and the needy"

our world needs people who know God... and if God's people... IF ALL OF THE PEOPLE WHO CLAIM TO KNOW GOD would step out and actually do the things that God himself said that it MEANS TO KNOW GOD... the world could be changed overnight.

But most of us are either too busy in our own world, or too bogged down by our own confused hearts. The Devil wants to confuse our hearts.

AND YOUR HEART IS CONFUSED, IF you believe that you do NOT KNOW GOD, because of something in your past that you have done wrong... your heart is confused, if you believe that you can't know God while at the same time struggle with something that life is throwing at you.

on the contrary, your heart is confused... IF YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU DO KNOW GOD BECAUSE YOU DON'T EVER SIN. Or because you come to church.

You are confused.

Your heart is confused if you believe that you know God, because you prophesy in his name... and cast demons out in his name... you are confused.

Jesus Himself said that (Matthew 7)... he says that on that last day, confused people will leave confused... thinking that they earned something only to find that it got them nowhere.

if you think that there is something that you are doing in your own life that will get you in right stance with God... you are confused.

Believe in Jesus. and love people.

Believing in Jesus is the center.

Loving people is the evidence of a transformed life. and yes, Morality follows... but it does not lead. AND IT WILL NOT LEAD OTHERS TO THE FOOT OF THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST.

and it is not a strong enough foundation to stand on. If you stand on morality as the building blocks of your faith, the entire thing will collapse the moment you make a mistake.

and that is not the Gospel.

The Gospel is that on your worst day Jesus died for you.

Transformed people aren't perfect, but they are becoming people of love.