

BACK TO BASICS

1 John 3:14-18

INTRODUCTION

- A. Let's do a little mathematics together. How much is 4×5 ? 6×8 ? 12×12 ? How did you come up with the right answers for those equations? Do you carry around a little plastic card containing all the answers to the most commonly asked mathematical questions? Did you have to resort to a calculator to arrive at those answers?
1. Of course not. You didn't even think about it. The answer popped *automatically* into your mind because you, like me, have learned your multiplication table. You know some basic math that helps you answer most of the day to day equations that pop up in modern society.
 2. But what if I asked you "What is 14×37 ?" Now we find ourselves in uncertain territory because we are dealing with numbers that lie outside the boundaries of the table that we memorized. The answer does not come automatically to mind. If we are not careful, we'll throw up our hands and say, "I never was much of a mathematician anyway."
 3. We can solve harder problems (like " 14×37 ") by breaking the equation down into smaller pieces. 4×7 ; 4×3 ; 10×7 ; 10×3 . Suddenly, we are back to dealing with questions we know the answers to. And, marvel of marvel, when you add it all up you can solve the big question because you know the answers to basic formulas.
- B. Christianity is very much the same thing. There are some basic, fundamental issues that give us the answers to Christian living. There is a "Life Table" for Christians that constitute home ground for us – the source of our security and identity. We don't have to carry around little plastic cards containing all the answers to the most commonly asked religious questions. We can know most answers automatically if we learn the basics by heart.
1. Even when the questions become more difficult, when we have to deal with questions outside the boundaries of our basic understanding, we need to go back to the basics. We can often solve complicated religious questions by breaking them down into smaller pieces. We can start with questions we know the answers to – questions that call us back to basics and to those fundamental principles we learned from the beginning.
 2. In 1 John, we have the multiplication table for Christian living. It doesn't cover every situation or answer every question, but it goes a long way toward helping us know we are on the right track. Confess Jesus as your Lord, keep God's commands, and love each other – those are the equations that John repeats over and over in this book. He repeats himself not because he has nothing else to say but because he has nothing *more important* to say.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT BELIEVING.

A. Real Christianity Begins with Christ – 1 John 1:1-4.

1. The witness of John:
 - a. Jesus is real – heard, saw, touched (1:1).
 - b. Jesus is significant – from the beginning (1:1), Word of Life (1:1), eternal life (1:2), Son of God (1:3).
2. Christianity begins with fellowship with Christ. What John saw and heard (i.e. Jesus) gives us fellowship.
 - a. John invites us to have fellowship with him (1:3).

- b. More importantly, he invites us to have a fellowship with God that is available only through Jesus (1:3).

B. Don't Settle for Anything Less – 1 John 2:18, 20-25.

1. There are those who have gotten Jesus wrong.
 - a. Bowing down before statues and images rather than the real, live, breathing Jesus.
 - b. Jesus the revolutionary or the politician or the social worker or the therapist, rather than Jesus the God of the Universe.
 2. There are even those who have denied Jesus entirely.
 - a. They deny that he is the Christ.
 - b. They deny that he came from God.
 - c. In so doing, they throw God out with Jesus.
 3. The real Christian remains in Christ.
 - a. He acknowledges Jesus as Lord and Savior (2:23).
 - b. He confesses Jesus as the source of life (1:2; 5:12).
 - c. He "believes in" (5:1), "lives in" (3:6), "remains in" (2:24), "continues in" (2:28), "hopes in" (3:3) Jesus.
- C.** If we would go back to basics and ask what is truly fundamental about Christian living, we could start with what we believe about Jesus.
1. Are we focused on Him? Is He the center of our universe, the source of our life, the hope for our future, the content of our message?
 2. Do we confess Him as Lord and Savior, and bow to His will for our lives?
 3. To be a Christian, you have to know Christ.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT LIVING – 1 John 1:5-2:6.

A. Three Ways of Stating this Principle.

1. We must walk in the light (1:5, 7).
2. We must obey Christ's commands (2:3).
3. We must imitate Christ's example (2:6)
4. John stresses the necessity of living pure, holy, righteous lives if we would know we are Christians.

B. The Great Hindrance in Keeping this Principle

1. Sin is an inescapable part of the human experience.
 - a. John is not stressing "sinlessness."
 - b. It is not the presence of sin that disqualifies us from "walking in the light" so much as how we *deal* with the presence of sin.
 - c. All people, including Christians, have sin in their lives (Rom. 3:23) – obstacles which must be overcome as we try to obey Christ's commands.
2. There are two kinds of sinners in the church:
 - a. Those who deny sin and thus walk in darkness. Such people are:
 - i. 1:6 – Liars.
 - ii. 1:8 – Self-deceived.
 - iii. 1:10 – Blasphemers – calling God a liar (1:10)
 - b. Those who confess sin and limit its role in their lives. These people, in contrast:
 - i. Have fellowship with God (1:5) and each other (1:7).
 - ii. Are purified constantly by Christ's blood (1:7).
 - iii. Have an advocate with the Father (2:1).

- C. If we would go back to basics and ask what is truly fundamental about Christian living, we must look hard at the way we live.
 - 1. We must obey Christ, live as He did, walk in the light.
 - 2. And when we fail, we must be quick to acknowledge that we are sinners and that we need Jesus to cleanse us from sin and make things right between ourselves and God.
 - 3. To be a Christian, you have to keep Christ's commands and accept Christ's forgiveness.
 - 4. This hasn't changed (Hebrews 13:8), "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*"

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT LOVING – 1 John 2:7-11.

A. The New Command

- 1. Shades of Jn. 13:34-35, "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*"
 - a. How new and awesome that command must have seemed to the disciples when Jesus taught them to love each other.
 - b. This was a new love, with new depths and new dimensions and a new pattern in Jesus himself.
- 2. The command was "old" in that it made up one of the very basic principles of Christian living. It was foundational for living in the light.
- 3. Yet it is new again, since it must be rediscovered and reaffirmed by each follower of Christ.

B. Relationships are Fundamental to Christian Living.

- 1. Throughout this book, John talks about what Christian love entails:
 - a. 3:16 – It means laying down your life for your brother just as Jesus laid down His life for us.
 - b. 3:17 – It means sharing material possessions with those who are in need.
 - c. 3:18 – It means not just talking about love, but acting to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters.
 - d. 4:19-21 – It means showing that we truly love God by the way we love those who are made in His image (4:19-21).
- 2. If you want to walk in the light, you must love your brother in this way.
- 3. Anything less than this is the equivalent to "hating" your brother and "murdering" him (3:15).

- C. If we would go back to basics and ask what is truly fundamental about Christian living, we must deal with the way we treat each other.
 - 1. Religion is not a solitary business conducted between an individual and his God.
 - 2. It is a group endeavor that involves our relationships with each other as much as our relationship with God.
 - 3. To be a Christian, you have to love those who belong to Christ.

CLOSING

- A. When we know our "Life Table" we can find a great assurance and peace about our walk with God.
- B. We can know we are Christians and that we are walking in the light.
- C. We can have confidence that Christ is honored in our lives, even when those lives are far from perfect.