

How Can I Know?

Lesson 6: Born of God: The Marks of New Life -- 1 John 3:1-10

There is a moment many parents describe, looking at a newborn for the first time and seeing, unmistakably, a family resemblance. The nose, the chin, the shape of the eyes. The child has not done anything yet, has not earned the likeness, has not chosen it. It is simply there, the mark of where this little life came from. And as the child grows, the resemblance deepens, not only in features but in mannerisms, in the way she laughs, in the things she loves. She belongs to this family, and over time it shows.

John reaches for exactly this kind of wonder when he writes, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1). Stop and feel the weight of it. We are not merely God's servants, His subjects, His creatures. We have been born into His family. The love that made this possible is so extravagant that John can hardly find words for it. And then he tells us something breathtaking about the future: when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

But John does not let this stay sentimental. A real birth produces a real family resemblance, and so he turns to the marks of those who have truly been born of God. Children of God, he says, practice righteousness; they do not make a settled practice of sin. They have a hope that purifies them. Their lives, over time, begin to look like their Father's. John is drawing a line, gently but clearly, between those who are merely religious and those who have actually been born again, between the children of God and the children of the devil.

For our study on assurance, this passage is a gift and also a challenge. It is a gift because it tells us that assurance can be confirmed by a real, observable change: a life increasingly marked by righteousness, a hope that is actually purifying us. It is a challenge because it asks us to look honestly at the direction of our lives. John is not demanding instant perfection; he is describing a genuine new birth that shows itself in a new way of living. Read these verses, and look for the family resemblance.

Group Discussion: John marvels that God's love has made us His children, and then says this new birth shows itself in how we live (3:1, 9-10). Why do you think John moves so quickly from the wonder of being God's children to the evidence of it in our conduct? How are the two connected?

Personal Reflection: John says children of God increasingly bear a family resemblance to their Father. When you look honestly at the direction of your life over the past few years, do you see a growing resemblance to God, or a life that has stalled? Where do you most long to see His likeness grow in you?

Read 1 John 3:1-10

Study Questions

1. John exclaims, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are” (3:1). What does it mean to be a child of God, and what does this status reveal about the love of God toward us?
2. When you look honestly at your life over recent years, do you see a growing family resemblance to God, or a life that has stalled or drifted? Name one specific way you long to see His likeness grow in you.
3. John says, “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” (3:2). What does this teach about the believer’s present identity and future hope?
4. John says, “Everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure” (3:3). How has hope in Christ actually motivated you to pursue purity, and where might a weak or distant hope be leaving you spiritually careless?
5. John defines sin as “lawlessness” and says Christ “appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin” (3:4–5). What do these verses teach about the seriousness of sin and the purpose of Christ’s coming?

6. Is there a sin you have stopped fighting, quietly accepting it as just part of who you are? In light of Christ's purpose to take sin away, what would it look like to take up that fight again rather than surrender to it?
7. John gives a striking test: "Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil... No one born of God makes a practice of sinning" (3:8-9). What is the difference between a believer who still struggles with sin and someone who "makes a practice" of it, and why does this distinction matter?
8. Children resemble their Father not only in avoiding wrong but in actively doing good. Where is God calling you not merely to stop a sin but to take up a positive practice of righteousness that reflects His character to those around you?
9. John says the new birth produces a real change: God's children do not practice sin, while the children of the devil do (3:9-10). How does this passage steer between the presumption of 'once saved, always saved' and the despair of the struggling believer, and what does it teach about the assurance that flows from a genuinely changed life?
10. Look back across this lesson on being born of God. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses, and the single truth from 1 John 3:1-10 that you most need to carry into the coming week.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: John 3:1–8, born again of water and the Spirit; Galatians 3:26–27, sons of God through faith, baptized into Christ; Romans 8:12–17, the Spirit putting sin to death and bearing witness that we are God's children; 2 Corinthians 5:17, anyone in Christ is a new creation; Titus 3:4–7, saved through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.