



How Can I Know that I Have Been Born Again

Studies in I John

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Did you ever wonder if you are really saved or not? Perhaps you have a hard time with your attitude or with your emotions. Or perhaps you are repeatedly tempted by a certain sin and often give in to it. You think, "Would I really do these things if I were a Christian?" It may be that many doubts are plaguing your mind and causing you to question your relationship with Jesus Christ. How can you be sure you are really saved?

The wonderful book of I John tells several ways you can know that you have been born again. As you read through this study, ask yourself, "Do I meet the criteria? If I do, I can know that I have been born again."

1. I can know that I have been born again if I walk in the light.

I John 1:7 says, *"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."*

Cleansing from sin sets you apart from the unbeliever. Those who do not know Jesus have no cleansing from sin because they have not come to the light. John 3:19-21 explains, *"¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. ²¹But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."*

If you have come to the light so that the word of God can reveal your sins and your sins have been made manifest by the light, that is one marker by which you can tell that you have been saved. If you were not saved and continuing to walk in sin, you would want to avoid the light. But, if you have come to the light and allowed God's light to show you your sin and have trusted in Jesus to take away your sin, you are now walking in the light. Instead of doing evil deeds, you are doing deeds wrought in God. Because God does these works through you, these works are righteous. The Bible says, *"every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."* (I John 2:29b)

You can know that you have been born again if you are walking in the light.

2. I can know that I have been born again if I keep His commandments

I John 2:3,5,6 says, *"³And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁵But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. ⁶He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."*

You can know that you have been born again if you keep God's commandments, but what are His commandments? I John 3:23 explains, *"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."* Do you believe on the name of God's Son, Jesus Christ? Have you trusted in Him as your Savior? If so, you can be assured that you have been born again. Jesus is the way to salvation. There is no other way. Acts 4:12 says, *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*

You can know that you have been born again if you walk as Jesus walked. Jesus walked in love toward others, especially toward His disciples. He loved them, even unto the end. Jesus loved His disciples even when they deserted Him. Do you love others? Are you a true friend to them? If so, this is evidence that you have been born again.

The book of John teaches this same thing. In John 15:14, Jesus said, *"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."* But what does Jesus command you? How did Jesus walk? A good way to find out the answer to these questions is to study through the gospels. Look at Jesus' life. How did He walk? What did He do? What kind of fruit did He bear? What were His commandments? Why did He command these things? Interestingly, when God gives a command in Scripture, He almost always gives a reason for the command in the same passage. Here is an example: In John 13:34, Jesus said, *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."* But why should we love one another? Jesus explains, *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* (verse 35) We should love one another so that other people know we are Jesus' disciples. Our love toward one another is evidence that we have been born again.

Search the Scriptures and then examine your life. What does Jesus command? Are you doing it? How did Jesus walk? Are you walking as He walked? What kind of fruit did Jesus bear? Are you bearing the same kind of fruit? Jesus said, *"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."* (John 15:8) Good works do not produce salvation, but a person who is born again will do good works. If you have not been born again, you cannot keep Jesus' commandments or walk as He walked because Jesus said, *"without me ye can do nothing."* (See John 15:5) Good works are evidence of salvation, and they produce assurance of salvation.

You can know that you have been born again if you keep Jesus' commandments and walk as He walked.

3. I can know that I have been born again if I acknowledge the Son of God.

I John 2:23 says, *"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also."*

Some people do not believe in a triune God. They think that the concept of a triune God is the same as believing in three gods. Therefore, they refuse to acknowledge the Holy Spirit and the Son. The Bible says that those who will not acknowledge the Son do not have the Father. You cannot be born again if you deny the Son. The concept of a triune God is hard to understand, but the Bible does explain a little about it. You can read more about it under point 8 in this study.

You can know that you have been born again if you acknowledge the Son because God said, *"he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also."*

4. I can know that I have been born again if I understand spiritual things, because I have the anointing (Holy Spirit) within me to teach me.

I John 2:27 says, *"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."*

Here is a test to help you know whether or not you have been born again. Do you understand spiritual things? When you read the Bible, do you need someone to explain it to you, or can you understand it and apply the principles to your own life. If you are able to understand spiritual concepts from Scripture, this is evidence that you have been born again. It means that you have the anointing (Holy Spirit) abiding within you to teach you the truths found in the things you read. As the Holy Spirit leads you, you will understand and obey truth and you will abide in Him. I John 3:24 explains a little more. It says, *"And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."*

The Holy Spirit helps you understand God's commandments and obey them. He is your power to live the Christian life. You abide in Christ and Christ abides in you by the Holy Spirit which God has given you. This Holy Spirit is your Helper and will guide you into all truth. In John 16:13,14, Jesus tells how the Holy Spirit works in you. He says, *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. ¹⁴He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."*

You can know that you have been born again if you understand the Scripture and have power to apply it to your life and obey it because the Holy Spirit lives in you.

5. I can know that I have been born again if I keep my heart pure and do righteousness.

I John 3:3 says, *"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."*

This verse does not mean that you can make yourself pure, but it does mean that you desire to have a pure heart and your daily walk shows evidence of that purity.

One way to keep your heart pure is to guard it against evil. Proverbs 4:23 says, *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."* Memorize God's word. Hide it in your heart and mind. The Psalmist explains, *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."* (Psalm 119:11)

If you do sin after you have been born again, you *"have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."* (See I John 2:1) It is Jesus' blood that *"cleanseth us from all sin."* (1:7) If you sin, God has a remedy for it, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1:9) Keeping short accounts with God is another way to keep your heart pure.

A third way to keep your heart pure is to live righteously. If you hide God's word in your heart and confess your sin to God, and Jesus has cleansed you from all unrighteousness, then you will see that righteousness is characteristic of your life. If you keep close to Jesus, you will be like Jesus. I John 3:7

says, *“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”*

A person whose life and walk are not characterized by God’s righteousness needs to examine his or her heart because that indicates that he or she has not been born again. Verse 10 explains, *“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God...”* A person who is not a child of God through the new birth is a child of the devil and needs to be saved. That person cannot do righteous works.

If you keep your heart pure, and if you walk righteously as Jesus walked, you can know that you have been born again.

6. I can know that I have been born again if I love my “brother”

I John 3:14 says, *“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”*

The specific context in this and the following verses seems to be referring to showing love to our Christian brothers and sisters in Christ. However, the same concept would apply to showing love to those in our family as well. The book of I John compares the relationship of Christians with each other to family relationships. Our attitude and relationships with the Christian brethren should be the same as it would be for those of our family.

In a family, people do wrong and need to be forgiven. They love and care for one another. They fellowship and find out each other’s needs. When a family member has a need, the other members pitch in to see how they can help. We ought to do the same with our Christian brothers and sisters as well. We are all part of God’s family.

Verses fifteen through eighteen explain more about how to love the brethren. Verse fifteen says, *“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”* This does not mean that, if you have feelings of dislike or waves of disgust come over you, that you are unsaved. We all have emotions, including dislike and disgust. However, as Christians, we need to allow the Holy Spirit to control those emotions.

Here is a test. If you feel hate or dislike or disgust for a person, give those emotions to God. Tell Him all about it, and allow the Holy Spirit to take control. If, after spending time alone with God and pouring out your heart to Him, you still cannot have victory over hating that person and cannot feel any good will toward him or her, then you must examine your life. You cannot love a person in your own strength. But, if you cannot allow the Holy Spirit to control your emotions and allow the Lord to love that person through you, you may not be saved. A person cannot harbor continual hatred in his or her heart and be a Christian. If your heart is filled with hate that cannot be overcome through God’s strength, you have not been born again.

Verse sixteen tells how deep our love should be for our brother (or sister). It says, *“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”* Many of us do not have this kind of deep love. It is not a natural human love. Romans

5:7 says, *"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die."*

How hard it is for one human being to be willing to give up his or her life for another! Yet, Jesus left us an example to follow. Romans 5:8 says, *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* True love does not think of self. True love is willing to sacrifice self for the good of others. What kind of love do you have? Would you be willing to give up your life for a brother or sister in Christ? What if that brother or sister had hurt or offended you; would you still be willing to lay down your life for him or her?

Most of us do not have this kind of love, but we ought to have an open heart to allow God to develop this kind of love in us. Are you willing to allow God to plant and cultivate this kind of love in your heart? Could you ask Him to make you willing?

When we first give ourselves to someone, we are then willing to give what we have to help them. Here is a test from God to help you know if true love abides in you. I John 5:17 says, *"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"*

You can know that you have been born again if you love the brethren. You can know that you love the brethren if you are willing to help them when they have a need. If a brother or sister is lacking something and has a true need, and you have what they need, are you willing to give it to them? If they need some help and you are able or know how to help them, are you willing to do so?

We do not always follow through on good intentions of helping others. But we can ask God to help us be more faithful in this area. However, if we really do not care about the needs of others, we must examine our hearts to see if we have truly been born again. I John 5:18 sums it all up, *"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."*

7. I can know that I have been born again if God has given me of His Spirit.

I John 4:13 says, *"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."*

When we were saved and trusted in Christ, we received an inheritance *"That we should be to the praise of his glory."* After we heard the word of truth, which is the gospel of our salvation, we were sealed with *"that holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."* (See Ephesians 1:11-14)

At the time of salvation, a person is sealed with the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit has come to live inside, just as Jesus promised, that person cannot be lost again. He or she is saved for ever. The Holy Spirit is that person's earnest, or down payment, of their inheritance. He is the Christian's promise and assurance of better and greater things to come.

How can you know if you have the Holy Spirit? If you understand spiritual things, you know that you have the Holy Spirit. If you do not understand spiritual things, you must examine your heart. You may not be saved. I Corinthians 2:14 says, *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of*

God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

If the Holy Spirit is living inside of you, then you will be able to discern between truth and error, and you will understand how to walk in the way of truth. Jesus explained how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. In John 16:13,14 He says, *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. ¹⁴He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."*

You can know that you have been born again if God has given you His Holy Spirit.

8. I can know that I have been born again if I confess that Jesus is the Son of God

I John 4:15 says, *"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."*

Many people believe in one God, but some do not understand the three-fold nature of God. Though God is one, He manifests Himself as three persons – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each person of the Godhead has unique characteristics and functions, yet all three are one. This is hard to understand, but we know it is true because the Bible reveals it to be true. Throughout the Bible, various passages of Scripture tell us about the activities of one of the persons of the Godhead. Sometimes the persons of the Godhead work together. One example of this would be the creation of man, during which God said, *"And God said, Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness..."* (Genesis 1:26). And that is just what God did. *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."* (Genesis 1:27)

Rarely, the persons of the Godhead are mentioned together in verses of Scripture. One of these verses is Matthew 28:19 which says, *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of **the Father**, and of **the Son**, and of **the Holy Ghost**."* "Holy Ghost" is simply another term for "Holy Spirit."

Jesus, God the Son, usually referred to in Scripture as "the Son" or "the Son of God," is the one whom the Father sent down from Heaven to die for us that we might be saved. He shed His blood on Calvary and paid the price of our sin in His own body on the cross so that we would not have to pay that price. He did that redemptive work for you, and He did it for me. He was able to do this because He was (and is) the perfect, sinless Son of God.

To be born again, you must believe in Jesus, the Son of God. The Bible says, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* (See Acts 16:31) This is the assurance that we have in Him. The Scripture says, *"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."* (I John 5:12)

You can know that you have been born again if you confess that Jesus is the Son of God.