

# 1 John 5:2 Commentary

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN  
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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			

From Talk Thru the Bible

**1 John 5:2** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments

**Greek** - en touto ginokomen (1PPAI) hoti agapomen (1PPAI) ta tekna tou theou hotan ton theon agapomen (1PPAS) kai tas entolas autou poiomen (1PPAS).

**Amplified** - By this we come to know (recognize and understand) that we love the children of God: when we love God and obey His commands (orders, charges)—[when we keep His ordinances and are mindful of His precepts and His teaching].

**NLT** We know we love God's children if we love God and obey his commandments.

**Wuest** - In this we know experientially that we are habitually loving the born-ones of God, whenever God we are habitually loving and His commandments are habitually guarding and observing with solicitous care.

- 1 Jn 3:22-24, 4:21 John 13:34,35 Jn 15:17
- [1 John 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE TWO DIRECTIONS OF AGAPE LOVE

**By this** (en touto) - **By what?** By what follows, observing God's commandments. Vincent says, "Not by this or from this, as an inference, but in the very exercise of the sentiment toward God, we perceive."

**By this** (en touto) is used most frequently in the NT by John and by him most often in First John - John 9:30; 13:35; 15:8; 16:30; 1Jn 2:3, 4, 5 (twice); 1Jn 3:10, 16, 19, 24; 1Jn 4:2, 9-10, 13, 17; 1Jn 5:2

Earlier John had written that love was a mark that one is truly born again - "We know that we have passed out of death into life (regeneration, cp Jn 5:24), because we **love the brethren**. He who does not love abides in death." (1Jn 3:14) Lack of love is a mark of a person who has never been born again.

**We love the children of God** - Horizontal spirituality is intimately connected with vertical spirituality (**we love God**).

And remember that not only do **we know** but others **know** for Jesus said "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.**" (Jn 13:34-35)

At the end of chapter 4 John wrote "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God Whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." (1Jn 4:20-21)

**Bruce Barton** - Just as believers' love for their brothers and sisters is the sign and test of their love for God, so their love for God (tested by obedience, 1Jn 5:3) is the only basis of their love for Christian brothers and sisters. John was not contradicting what he had written in 1Jn 4:20-21; rather, he was insisting that love for God and love for fellow believers cannot be separated. Christians cannot love God without loving their brothers and sisters in Christ; they can know that they love God, as well as other believers, if they are obeying him. John first urged the effect (love for others); now he urged the cause (love for God). ([1, 2, & 3 John- Life Application Bible Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** writes that 1Jn 5:2 "is the corollary to the truth John expressed in 1Jn 5:1. Just as it is impossible to love God without loving His children (v1), so also is it impossible to truly love His children apart from loving Him (v2). Those twin priorities of loving God and other Christians mark all who have been born again... In these five verses (1Jn 5:1-5), John weaves faith, love, and obedience all together inextricably. They exist mutually in a dynamic relationship, i.e., as the genuine proof of love is obedience, so the genuine proof of faith is love. The word keep conveys the idea of constant obedience (cf. John 8:31, 32; 14:15, 21; 15:10). (MacArthur Bible Commentary)

**Vine** explains that "What was stated in 1Jn 4:20-21, is purposely put in the opposite way in this verse. In the former passage love to God is the fulfillment of His commandments, which are shown to have their evidence in the love of His children. This same truth is stressed by being put in the converse way in the present passage. In other words, if we want to know whether we love our brother, it is necessary to ask if we love God, for the motive cause of love lies in God Himself, for "God is love." Here the test of our love to God is the doing of His commandments, that is to say, in loving our neighbor. **Taken together, then, the two passages show that love to God and love to one another are essentially associated and mutually evidential.**"

**Kistemaker** asks "What evidence is there for combining faith and love? John provides a ready answer. He writes, "This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands." Actually these words are almost a verbatim repetition of an earlier verse, "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands" (1Jn 2:3)." (Baker NT Commentary)

**Boice** has an interesting comment quoting from the work of C H Dodd - Verse 2 is not altogether unambiguous, however, as Dodd notes; for it can have two meanings. If the opening words "This is how" refer to what follows, as is generally the case in John's writings, the meaning would be that if we are uncertain whether or not we love other Christians, we may reassure ourselves by determining whether or not we love God the Father. In other words, love of God becomes the fixed point from which we may determine our attitude to others. It may be said in support of this view that John undoubtedly held that love of God and love of man

belong together, so that one may begin at either pole and arrive at the other. But the problem is that this form of reasoning is the opposite of what has been affirmed throughout the letter. It is by our love for one another that we are assured of our love for God; this is John's reasoning. Besides, just a few verses earlier John has argued that we cannot love God unless we love others.

The words of verse 2 are capable of another meaning, however, as Dodd shows in his careful discussion of the passage. In this reading the words "This is how" refer to what comes before. So the passage may be translated, "This is how [namely, the truth that if one loves the parent he inevitably loves the child] we know that, when we love God, we love the children of God and keep God's commandments." The logic would be: (1) Everyone who loves the parent loves the child; (2) every Christian is a child of God; (3) therefore, when we love God we love our fellow Christians.

Dodd concludes, "He [John] assumes the solidarity of the family as a fact of ordinary experience, and argues directly from it to the solidarity of the family of God. To be born of God is to be born into a family, with obligations, not only towards the Father of the family, but also (as part of our obligation to him) towards all his children." Love for others is therefore a direct result as well as an obligation of having become one of God's children. ([The Epistles of John Expository Commentary](#))

**We know** (1097)(**ginosko**) refers to knowledge gained by experience, a knowing intimately and not just intellectually. For example, John uses **ginosko** to describe those who refused to believe in Jesus writing "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world **did not know** Him." (Jn 1:10, see context Jn 1:11-13) After most of the followers departed from Jesus in Jn 6:66, Jesus confronted the twelve disciples asking "You do not want to go away also, do you?" (Jn 6:67) to which Peter replied "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and **have come to know** (**ginosko**) that You are the Holy One of God." (Jn 6:68-69) Notice that John links believing in Jesus with knowing Him.

**Ginosko** is in the **present tense** in this passage which signifies that we continually know or we have the constant experience of knowing we love God's children.

**We love** (25)(**agapao**) "expresses the purest, noblest form of love, which is volitionally driven, not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship." (John Macarthur) **Agapao** is in the **present tense** speaks of our habitual practice, of the general direction of our life, loving continually, self-sacrificially, unconditionally. And remember that this love is expressed best in actions not emotions. We don't just say we love them, we show we love them. Our life matches our lips, so to speak.

What proves that we really **love the children of God**? When we love God and keep His commandments. Since the false teachers do not obey God (e.g., 1Jn 1:6-2:2-note), their boasts about love are invalid (1Jn 4:20-note).

**Guzik** - Just as much as our love for the people of God reflects our love for God (as expressed in 1 John 3:10, 17), so our love and obedience to God is a demonstration of love to the body of Christ. It is sometimes said that the best thing a father can do for his children is to love his wife and their mother. Even so, the first way for a child of God to love his brothers and sisters in Christ is to love God and to obey Him. And, if you love the parent, you will love the child. It all works together.

**Wuest** - **Love** (agape, divine love) on the part of a saint for his brother in Christ is shown when that saint observes the commandments of God, for obedience to the commandments puts that saint in right relationship to his brother Christian, which relationship results in his acting in a loving manner toward that Christian. The converse also is true, namely, when a saint disobeys God's commandments, he is acting in an unloving way toward his fellow-saint. ([Word Studies from the Greek New Testament](#))

Jesus issues the following command to His disciples in some of His last words before He dies "This I command you, that you **love** (**present tense** = keep on loving) one another." (Jn 15:17) The only way a believer can keep on loving with self-less love is by continual reliance on (and filling by or control by) the Holy Spirit, Whose fruit is supernatural love (Gal 5:22-note). Don't try to love others in your own ("**Old Man**") strength because you will fail and become frustrated. The only way to love like Jesus loved others is by relying on the same power source that Jesus relied upon, the Holy Spirit (cp Lk 4:14, 18-19, Acts 10:37-38).

**Spurgeon** wrote that "Faith is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments."

**Paul** like John also frequently commented on **love** of saints for their brethren -

Ephesians 1:15-16-note For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which [exists] among you, and **your love for all the saints**, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention [of you] in my prayers;

Colossians 1:3-4-note We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and **the love which you have for all the saints**;

1Thessalonians 1:3-note constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and **labor of love** and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father

**When we love God and observe His commandments** - This is the evidence that we love God's children. Notice that we can say we **love God**, but here John links what we **say** with what we **do** (cp 1Jn 3:18-note). If we say we love God and do not keep His commandments we are deceiving ourselves. As noted above agape love is shown not just by our (godly) words but also (and especially) by our (godly) actions.

**Williamson** - Love is by nature reciprocal. It originates in God, because "God is love" (1Jn 4:8, 16). It circles back to the Creator, as believers worship him and love others (1Jn 4:19–21). The evidence that one truly loves God is demonstrated in carrying out (lit. doing) his commands. ([NBBC, 1, 2, & 3 John- A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition](#))

**C. H. Dodd** - "No doubt the author holds that love to God and love to man are so inseparable that the presence of either is evidence of the other."

**We love** (25)(**agapao**) is again in the **present tense** depicting this love as our lifestyle. None of us love God (keep His commandments) perfectly but the general direction of our life ought to be heavenward.

**Observe** (4160)(**poieo**) means we perform or do God's commandments with the **present tense** speaking of this as one's lifestyle and conveys the idea of accomplishing, carrying out or practicing God's commandments. **Be careful. Do not try to obey "legalistically" or you will become very frustrated.** Law and grace are like oil and water. They don't mix! Jettison self reliance and lean on the Spirit's provision of grace to do **supernaturally** what is absolutely impossible **naturally**! Supernatural fruit requires a supernatural Source!

Note that the older manuscript used for the KJV, the [Textus Receptus](#), has the verb **tereo** not **poieo**, the latter being in more modern Greek manuscripts (Nestle-Aland). The modern manuscripts do have **tereo** in 1Jn 5:3, this verb conveying the sense of keeping watch over or guarding. MacArthur distinguishes these two verbs noting that "**poieo** refers to action, **tereo** to the heart attitude that prompts obedience." Most of the other mentions by John of love shown by keeping His commandments use the verb **tereo**. (Jn 14:15, 21, 23, 24, Jn 15:10, 20)

**Commandments** (instructions, orders, requirements)(1785)(**entole**) from **en** = in, upon + **téllo** = accomplish, charge, command) refers to some type of demand or requirement. A general injunction, charge, precept of moral and religious nature. Of the 67 uses, all but three (Lk 15:29; Col 4:10; Titus 1:14) refer specifically to divine commandments.

In 14 passages **entole** is associated with agape love. (e.g., love one another is a repeated commandment - Jn 13:34 = described as a "new commandment", Jn 15:12, 1Jn 3:23, 2Jn 1:5). God's commandments "flush out" sin so to speak, showing the heinous, destructive nature of sin (See Ro 7:8, 9, 11, 13) **Entole** sometimes refers to commandments from men (not God) (Titus 1:14) Entole can sometimes mean an order authorizing a specific action (Jn 11:57).

**Entole** - 67x in 61v -

Matt 5:19; 15:3; 19:17; 22:36, 38, 40; Mark 7:8f; 10:5, 19; 12:28, 31; Luke 1:6; 15:29; 18:20; 23:56; John 10:18; 11:57; 12:49f; 13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12; Acts 17:15; Rom 7:8f; 13:9; 1 Cor 7:19; 14:37; Eph 2:15; 6:2; Col 4:10; 1 Tim 6:14; Titus 1:14; Heb 7:5, 16, 18; 9:19; 2 Pet 2:21; 3:2; 1 John 2:3f, 7f; 3:22ff; 4:21; 5:2f; 2 John 1:4ff; Rev 12:17; 14:12

**Ralph Martin** - The word commandment (entole) is featured prominently in both 1 John and 2 John (1 Jn 2:3, 4, 7, 8; 1Jn 3:22, 23, 24; 1Jn 4:21; 1Jn 5:2–3; 2 Jn 4, 5, 6), and in every case it appears that the commandments of God rather than Jesus are intended (see esp. 1 Jn 5:2–3; 2 Jn 4). John teaches that those who truly know God keep his commandments (1 Jn 2:3–4). (Dictionary of the later New Testament and its developments).

**Observe His commandments** - The test of true love for the children of God is whether we love God and His commandments. We show we love God by loving (keeping) His commandments. Don't say you love God and then live lawlessly, for that is self-deception.

**Guzik** - When our love and obedience for God grows cold, we do not only harm ourselves - we harm our brothers and sisters also. The damage is done, at the very least, because we are a "drag" on the spiritual progress of God's people. If we will not love and obey God for our own sake, then we should at least do it out of love for others.

**Boice** comments on the **three tests** in 1John 5:1-54 - When a birth takes place the individual involved is not born into isolation, nor is he a totally unique individual in the sense that his characteristics and attributes have no connection with those of people who have gone before. For one thing, he is born into a family and into family relations. For another, he possesses at least some of the characteristics of the one who has engendered him. Spiritually, this means that the child of God exhibits those characteristics about which the letter has been teaching. The first characteristic is love, both for the parent and for the other children. Earlier John has said that it is a characteristic of the child of God to love, since God is love (1Jn 4:7–8). Now he shows equally that it is a

characteristic of the child of God to be loved by those who are also members of God's family... (**Ed: Test 2 Obedience**) Love divorced from obedience to the commands of God is not love, however. So John immediately passes from love to the matter of God's commandments, saying, "This is love for God, to obey his commands." (1Jn 5:3)... **The third of John's tests** is expressed in these verses as belief. Indeed, it is with this concept that the section both begins and ends (vv. 1, 5). Between belief that "Jesus is the Christ" and belief that "Jesus is the Son of God" is found John's discussion of both love and obedience. The implication is that, just as it is impossible to have love without obedience or obedience without love, so also is it impossible to have either love or obedience without belief in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God. It was to lead men and women to this twofold confession that John's Gospel was written (John 20:30–31). ([Ibid](#))

Divine love on the part of a saint for his brother in Christ is shown when that saint observes the commandments of God. Why so? Because obedience to the commandments puts that saint in right relationship to his Christian brother, which results in his acting in a loving manner toward that Christian. The converse also is true, namely, when a saint disobeys God's commandments, he is acting in an unloving way toward his fellow-saint and he is fooling himself thinking he can love his brother unconditionally and sacrificially.

This truth seems to be so critical in the setting of the closest of all human interpersonal relationships, a husband and wife. If for example the husband is living in sin, in direct disobedience to God's commands, there is no way he can be loving his wife with that precious unconditional, sacrificial, death-to-self love that God commands husbands to practice continually (Eph 5:25-note) . **How important then is it for husbands to go quickly to the throne of grace to confess, repent, receive merciful forgiveness for their sins and the grace necessary to live the transformed supernatural life they are called to live as God fearing husbands!** Wow. That is a convicting truth!!! And oh how deceived we are when we as husbands think that we can "toy" with sin as if in a vacuum and not affect every interpersonal relationship we have! Look at the result of Jonah's defiant disobedience to God's clearly revealed will. His sin placed an entire shipload of pagan sailors in mortal danger (Jonah 1:4,14)!

**Adam Clarke** - Our love of God's followers is a proof that we love God. Our love to God is the cause why we love his children, and our keeping the commandments of God is the proof that we love him.

Scripture repeatedly links love of God with obedience to God. Has the modern evangelical church missed this basic truth? I sometimes wonder. And by the way, to reiterate, the only way to obey God's commandments, is to dependent on the Spirit's enabling power (cp Ro 8:13, Phil 2:12, Phil 2:13). To try to obey in our own power is to become a modern day "Pharisee!"

Exodus 20:6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who **love** Me and **keep** (**Septuagint** = **phulasso** in the **present tense**) My commandments.

Deuteronomy 5:10 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who **love** Me and **keep** (**Septuagint** = **phulasso** in the **present tense**) My commandments.

Deuteronomy 7:9 "Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who **love** Him and **keep** (**Septuagint** = **phulasso** in the **present tense**) His commandments;

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and **love** Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 [and] to **keep** (**Septuagint** = **phulasso** in the **present tense**) the LORD's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?

Daniel 9:4 And I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who **love** Him and **keep** (**Septuagint** = **phulasso** in the **present tense**) His commandments,

Matthew 12:47-50 And someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." 48 But He answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! 50 "For whoever **does the will** of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

John 14:15 "If you **love** Me, you will **keep** My commandments.

John 14:21-24 "He who has My commandments and **keeps** them, he it is who **loves** Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) \*said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone **loves** Me, he will **keep** My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. 24 "He who does not **love** Me does not **keep** My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

John 15:10; 14 "If you **keep** My commandments, you will abide in My **love**; just as I have **kept** My Father's commandments, and abide in His **love**. 14 "You are My **friends**, if you do what I **command** you.

1 John 2:3-6 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if **wekeep** His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not **keep** His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever **keeps** His word, in him the **love** of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked (How did Jesus walk - in obedience to His Father! cp Jn 15:10).

2 John 1:6 And this is **love**, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should **walk** in it.