

1 John 3:23 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

- [1 John 3:1](#)
- [1 John 3:2](#)
- [1 John 3:3](#)
- [1 John 3:4](#)
- [1 John 3:5](#)
- [1 John 3:6](#)
- [1 John 3:7](#)
- [1 John 3:8](#)
- [1 John 3:9](#)
- [1 John 3:10](#)
- [1 John 3:11](#)
- [1 John 3:12](#)
- [1 John 3:13](#)
- [1 John 3:14](#)
- [1 John 3:15](#)
- [1 John 3:16](#)
- [1 John 3:17](#)
- [1 John 3:18](#)
- [1 John 3:19](#)
- [1 John 3:20](#)
- [1 John 3:21](#)
- [1 John 3:22](#)
- [1 John 3:23](#)
- [1 John 3:24](#)

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 3:23 This is His **commandment**, that we **believe** in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and **love** one another, just as He commanded us:

Greek - kai aute estin (3SPA1) e entole autou hina pisteusomen (1PAAS) to onomati tou huiou autou Iesou Christou kai agapomen (1SPAS) allelous kathos edoken (3SAAI) entolen hemin.

NET - Now this is his commandment: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he gave us the commandment.

Wuest - And this is His commandment, namely, We should believe the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and be habitually loving one another even as He gave a commandment to us

- **commandment:** Dt 18:15-19 Ps 2:12 Mk 9:7 John 6:29 Jn 14:1 Jn 17:3 Acts 16:31 1Ti 1:15
- **love:** 1Jn 3:11 2:8-10 4:21 Mt 22:39 John 13:34 15:12 Eph 5:2 1Th 4:9 1Pe 1:22 4:8
- [1 John 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

GOD'S TWOFOLD COMMAND: BELIEVE AND LOVE

If you believe in Jesus, you will love fellow believers, because every command God gives comes pre-packaged with God's enabling power [vis-a-vis](#) His indwelling Spirit. Are you loving the "one another's" God has sovereignly placed in your life?

Hiebert introduces 1Jn 3:23-24 noting that "Basic to the believer's assurance is the reality of his spiritual union with Christ. This assurance is grounded in the two-sided command to believers (1Jn 3:23), resulting in a two-sided fellowship which is given experiential confirmation through the indwelling Holy Spirit (1Jn 3:24)."

This is His commandment - "John now gathers up the various commandments just referred to in one comprehensive commandment" (Hiebert). God the Father's commandment is to **believe** in Jesus and **love** like Jesus. Creed is shown by conduct. What we believe will affect how we behave. How we behave shows what we believe. If we believe, we will love.

Vincent makes an interesting point on John's use of **commandment** in the singular not the plural - singular: for **faith and love** are not separate commandments, but are indissolubly united. We cannot truly **love one another** without **faith in Christ**, nor can we truly believe in Him without love. (**Ed:** As Jesus told His disciples "apart from Me you can do nothing." Jn 15:5).

Sam Storms - John sums up the commandments (plural) as one command (singular), yet a command which has two parts: first, **believe** in the name of Jesus, and second, **love** one another. ([First John 3:10b-24](#))

Commandment (1785)(**entole** from **en** = in, upon + **téllō** = 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. See Christ's summary of the commandments (Mk 12:28-31 = Mt. 22:34-40).

Lenski reiterates what has been said above - You cannot believe without loving nor love without believing.

Plummer - This verse is the answer to those who would argue from the preceding verses that all that is required of us is to do what is right; it does not much matter what we believe.

We see a parallel passage in John's Gospel

Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the **works** (PLURAL) of God?" (They wanted to know what works God required of them that they might qualify for the gift of the food that lasts forever.) Jesus answered and said to them, "**This is the work** (SINGULAR) **of God**, that you **BELIEVE** in Him Whom He has sent." (John 6:28-29) (And this is a "work" [SINGULAR] they were not ready to perform as suggested by John 6:41-42. As a result of Jesus' "hard sayings" they walked away and if they never repented they walked away into eternal punishment! - John 6:66)

Believe (4100)(**pisteuo**) is John's first use in this letter (9x - 1Jn 3:23; 4:1, 16; 5:1, 5, 10 [3x], 1Jn 5:13). In this context **pisteuo** means that we consider all the Bible says about the **Name** of Jesus to be true and worthy of our once and for all decisive act of trusting Him (**aorist tense**, but some manuscripts have the present tense) (Mk 9:7 Jn 6:29 Jn 14:1 Jn 17:3). We accept Him as the true God and have a firm conviction as to His efficacy to save us forever. As Paul said to the Philippian jailer "**Believe** (**aorist imperative**) in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31) As Luke records ""And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) (**Related Resource:** Spurgeon's sermon on [John 8:30-32 Believing On Jesus, And Its Counterfeits](#))

Hiebert - Lenski insists that "the aorist is effective: definitely, effectively, once for all believe." As such, the statement of the command carries with it John's appeal to his readers, confronted by the challenge of the heretics, once for all to settle the finality of their faith commitment.

Burdick - The command is to **'believe on the Name,'** by which we understand John to mean that we are to believe all that the name

signifies--divine sonship and real humanity combined in one Person, 'his Son Jesus Christ.' To this confession of faith no Gnostic could subscribe.

Harris - Belief, for the author, is not mere assent or accepting certain information as true... The fact that the author regards belief as something "commanded" here is also in line with the description of faith as a "work" in John 6:29 (cf. John 16:27). ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 3:11-24](#))

The respected Greek lexicon author **W E Vine** defines authentic, saving **belief** as consisting of

- (1) a firm conviction which produces full acknowledgment of God's revelation of Truth - (2Thes 2:11 -"in order that they all may be judged who did not believe [pisteuo] the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.")
- (2) a personal surrender to the Truth (Jn 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe [pisteuo] in His name") and
- (3) a conduct inspired by and consistent with that surrender.

R. S. Candlish comments on **believe** - Keep on believing. Continue to believe more and more, simply because you see and feel it more and more to be "his commandment that you should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Unbelief, in you who have believed, is aggravated disobedience. And, as such, it is and must be especially displeasing to God. It is his pleasure that his Son should be known, trusted, worshipped, loved; honored as he himself would be honored. You cannot displease the Father more than by dishonoring the Son; refusing to receive him, and rest upon him, and embrace him, and hold him fast, and place full reliance upon him as redeemer, brother, friend. Do not deceive yourselves by imagining that there may be something rather gracious in your doubts and fears; your unsettled and unassured frame of mind; as if it betokened humility, and a low esteem of yourselves. Beware lest God see in it only a low esteem of his Son Jesus Christ.

His Son Jesus Christ (also in 1Jn 1:3, 1Jn 5:20) - The Name Jesus emphasizes His earthly ministry, and Christ His exalted position. Absolutely "no one comes to the Father, but through" **His Son Jesus Christ** (Jn 14:6).

The Name of His Son Jesus Christ - The Name stands for all that He is. **Westcott** terms John's call to believe in His Name a "compressed creed." In 1Jn 5:13 John writes "These things I have written to you who **believe in the Name of the Son of God**, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." To believe in Jesus' Name is to receive Him as Savior. John wrote "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, [even] to **those who believe in His Name.**" (Jn 1:12) Those who do not believe in His Name are judged, John writing "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because **he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God**" (Jn 3:18)

The Name is a [metonymy](#), which means using the part (Name) as a reference for the whole. Here Jesus' **Name**" is a reference to His whole person.

Harris on believing in **the Name** - believing "**in the Name of His (God's) Son Jesus Christ**" here amounts to essentially the same thing as believing "in the Son of God" in 1 John 5:10. Belief in the Son makes people God's children, and as such they are under the protection of the Name (cf. John 17:11–12). They are also able to ask for things in Jesus' name (John 14:13–14), and although the author of 1 John does not focus on that aspect here, he was concerned in the previous verse with the believer asking and receiving things from God. ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 3:11-24](#))

Hiebert - John here uses no word for "on" or "in" but rather the dative of personal relationship, a personal committal to "the Name" as denoting the person and all that He is. His identity is explicitly stated: "his Son Jesus Christ." "His Son" stresses the true deity and the unique Sonship of this person. In His incarnate appearing He was identified as the historical person "Jesus Christ" (1Jn 1:3). The name "Jesus" (Iēsous) is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, meaning "the Lord is salvation." It is the name of His humanity, given Him before His birth to declare His saving ministry (Matt. 1:21). "Christ" (Christos) is the Greek translation of the Hebrew term "Messiah" (transliterated messias in John 1:41 and John 4:25) and declares His messianic identity. The double designation represents the earliest Christian confession of faith, "Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 2:36; 3:20; 5:42; cf. John 20:30–31).

John MacArthur on the **Name** - His name denotes all that He is (including the fact that He is both Savior and Lord, cf. Phil. 2:9–11). Believing in the name of Christ is an important, oft-repeated New Testament theme (John 3:15–16; 20:31; Acts 16:31; cf. Mark 1:15; Luke 24:47), especially in this letter (1Jn 2:12; 4:2, 15). It was the reason John wrote both his gospel (Jn 20:31) and his first epistle (1Jn 5:13). ([1-3 John- MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Vincent on **believe in the Name** - on all that is revealed in the Gospel concerning Him (**Ed**: And in the entire Bible for that matter, Old and New Testaments!), and on Himself in respect to His person, offices, and atoning work.

See Related Resource - Name of the LORD is a Strong Tower: Summary

- Christ The Breaker
- Christ Our Rock
- Christ The Rock of Ages
- Christ The Rock of Our Salvation
- Christ The Smitten Rock
- Christ Our Rock of Refuge-Pt 1
- Christ Our Rock of Refuge-Pt 2
- Christ the Stone
- Christ Mighty God - El Gibbor
- Jesus Name Above All Names
- Jesus Mighty to Save
- Jehovah = Jesus

David Allen - The gospel is not only something to be believed but something to be obeyed, and all people are commanded to repent and believe the gospel. This concept is not unique to John but is found as well in Paul. In his Areopagus sermon he said to the Athenians, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30, 31). Likewise in Romans 1:5 Paul speaks of the gospel as something to be obeyed when he says the reason he was given grace and apostleship was to "bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name." John himself tells us that he wrote his own Gospel so that people would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved: "But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Notice how in this key verse in John's Gospel there are five words that occur in 1 John 3:23: believe, name, Son, Jesus, and Christ. (Preaching the Word - 1-3 John: Fellowship in God's Family)

Love (25)(agapao) is in the **present tense** which calls for the habitual practice of selfless, sacrificial, God-like love. This quality of love is not a feeling, but is the result of will and choice (enabled by the Holy Spirit - we see this in Php 2:13NLT-note where Paul says "God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.")

One another - This pronoun calls for this love to be reciprocal, a mutual expression in the Christian community. "Christian love is not a one way street; it must flow in both directions. John has mentioned the need for mutual love before (1Jn 2:10-11; 3:11, 14), but now for the first time he specifically unites faith and love. Both are essential as a test for a true Christian." (Hiebert)

Related Resource:

- [What does it mean to love one another?](#)

Stott: There is a significant difference in the tense of the two verbs, **believe** and **love**, faith in Christ being here regarded as a decisive act ... , and love for the brethren as a continuous attitude. Both are tests of a true Christian."

Just as He commanded us (as He has given command) - This presumably refers to Jesus' words in the Upper Room before He was crucified - "A **new commandment** I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (Jn 13:34) and "This is My **commandment**, that you love one another, just as I have loved you... This I command you, that you love one another." (Jn 15:12, 17, cp 1Jn 2:7-8 - "**new commandment**")

Love one another (13x in 12v in NT - Jn 13:34; 15:12, 17; Ro 13:8; 1Th 4:9; 1Pe 1:22; 1Jn 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2Jn 1:5). This section (1Jn 3:11-24) began with **love one another** (1Jn 3:11-note).

Kistemaker - John moves from **faith** to **love**, for these two concepts are closely linked together. In his Gospel John reveals that Jesus repeatedly gave the command love one another (John 13:34; 15:12, 17). Believing in Jesus Christ, then, means to obey his command to love each other. John repeats this command. By using the present tense of the verb to love, he exhorts the readers to continue to love one another. ([Epistles of John- Simon J. Kistemaker](#))

Commanded To Love - Read: 1 John 3:16-24 | As a result of adult children neglecting their responsibilities, some elderly parents in Singapore are forced to seek financial help from charities and other state agencies. Speaking about this escalating situation, a government official said, "We cannot legislate love."

In the Bible, however, love is commanded. That is what Moses told the nation of Israel: "I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways" (Deut. 30:16). And Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to "love the Lord your God" (Mark 12:30).

How can God command love? His supreme display of love at Calvary gave Him that right. Jesus' beloved disciple, John, wrote: "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us... 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" (1 John 3:16,23).

What opportunities do you have to obey God's command to love? Honoring parents by caring and providing for them? Ministering to a sick friend? Offering a gracious and kind word to someone who is difficult to love?

Lord, because You laid down Your life for us, help us to show love to others. By C. P. Hia [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Love is an attitude, love is a prayer,
For someone in sorrow, a heart in despair;
Love is good will for the gain of another,
Love suffers long with the fault of a brother.
—Anon.

We show our love for God when we love one another.