



God's Fingerprints
15 Evidences of Genuine Faith
Overview of 1 John by Matt Black

Christians are God's workmanship, literally His masterpiece. God's fingerprints are all over His children. One of the most important books in the Bible defending the need for every Christian to display a life transformed by God's touch is the book of First John.

This is a letter written by the Apostle John to churches who were confused about what makes a person a Christian, or "born again." John's encouragement in the book is that people can know during their lives that they truly are "born of God," and that they will be accepted by Him on the day when we see Him face to face (1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,3,18).

What is Regeneration?

What does it mean to be "born of God" or "born again"? Theologians call it "regeneration." Regeneration is a miraculous act of God in your heart where He imparts new spiritual life to us. This is sometimes called "being born again" (using language from the Gospel of John 3:3–8). John talks about those to whom Christ gave power to be-come children of God—they "were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn 1:13).

This sovereign work of God in regeneration was also predicted in the prophecy of Ezekiel. Through him God promised a time in the future when he would give new spir-itual life to his people:

"A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances" (Eze 36:26-27). This promise is for you, and it is essential if you are going to have any meaningful growth and change in your marriage.

There is a time and place in our lives when God wakes us up! He gives us a spiritual new birth, a new beginning, a new nature. St. Paul says likens regeneration to a spiritual resurrection from the dead. He says, "you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world... But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:1-6).

God's Spirit takes up residency in the human heart giving the person a new nature, a new way of thinking, a new perspective – indeed a whole new worldview.

John Piper says regeneration is “the spiritual transformation in a person, brought about by the Holy Spirit, that brings the individual from being spiritually dead to become a spiritually alive human being.”

St. John wrote his First Epistle (or letter) to give various marks or evidences that a person is really, truly a Christian. There were people in his day called the Gnostics who taught several erroneous things. They taught that Jesus was not God and did not become the Christ until just before he went to the cross. They taught that he was actually corrupt-ed with a sinful nature. They believed that the physical body could never be redeemed and that only the spirit or soul was good. They concluded that you could act however you wanted and still be a Christian.

John writes the letter of 1 John to demonstrate that there is a radical transformation that occurs in the life of all of God's people. His purpose is to give each of God's children joy and assurance in knowing the marks of God's work in their lives. There are at least fifteen of these marks or “fingerprints” of God in every believer's life.

Evidences of True Salvation: Gifts from Christ

The essential point of 1 John is that there are certain evidences and marks whereby you will definitely know if you have experienced the new birth. These marks are all gifts from Christ. They

John Piper summarizes the purpose of 1 Jn by compiling all the reasons John has said he has written this letter. Piper's synopsis is helpful: “Summing up all the reasons for writing 1 John goes like this: *I am writing because you are true believers, but there are deceivers in your midst, and I want you to be rock-solid confident in your present possession of eternal life as regenerate children of God, so that you are not drawn away after sin. And if this letter has that effect my joy will be complete.* So at the heart of his reason for writing is the desire to help them know they are born again—that they now have new spiritual life. Eternal life.”¹ The marks that follow are evidences of the Holy Spirit. They are like “God's fingerprints” on our lives.

ARE THESE FINGERPRINTS OF GOD ON YOUR LIFE?

1 – I HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD | “...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete” (1 Jn 1:3-4).

¹ John Piper. *Finally Alive* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2009), 125.

Every Christian has within the spiritual compulsion and hunger for God's holy presence. it's like food! To look into the face of Jesus through prayer and the Word is a thrill!

2 – I CAN NO LONGER LIVE COMFORTABLY IN SIN | “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (1 Jn 1:6).

“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God” (1 Jn 3:9).

“We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him” (1 Jn 5:18).

If spiritual intimacy is like a food for the Christian, then sin is like a cancer. All you want to do as a child of God is get rid of it—keep it as far away as possible.

3 – I OBEY GOD FROM MY HEART | “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 Jn 2:3). “If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him” (1 Jn 2:29).

Our feelings and our circumstances change. As true Christians, we choose to glorify God no matter what we feel like.

4 – I HUNGER FOR GOD'S WORD | “...you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one” (1 Jn 2:14).

True Christians hunger for God and his Word like a newborn baby craves milk (1 Pet 1:2-3). Before a person is saved, there may be a passing hunger, but once a person is born again, the hunger is unquenchable.

5 – I LIVE SEPARATE FROM THE WORLD | “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever” (1 Jn 2:15-17).

“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 Jn 5:4).

If you are a believer, you have rendered yourself dead to this world of sin. Specifically, you do not live for, and thereby worship the world's pleasures,

possessions, and pride. The world offers a false happiness. We know that true happiness is found in our holy fellowship with Christ.

D. L. Moody put it best: “The man that is popular with the world is not a friend of Jesus. You cannot serve two masters. The world hates Christ, and if you are a friend of the world you cannot be a friend of His. You may be sure that something is wrong with you when everybody is your friend.”²

6 – I CONFESS CHRIST TO THE WORLD | “No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also” (1 Jn 2:23).

True Christians openly confess that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. A true believer not only believes that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Ancient of Days come in human flesh to redeem guilty sinners, but each believer has the deep desire to confess the Person of Jesus Christ boldly.

Jesus essentially said the same thing, “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 10:32-33).

7 – I LONG FOR JESUS TO COME AGAIN | “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are... 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. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure” (1 Jn 3:1-3).

The genuine child of God knows that one day, we shall be like Jesus! Our unsaved neighbors are looking for the next great thing in fashion or among the celebrities or the movies or games or technology or the next great job opportunity. As Christians, we want to use all that God gives us for the glory of God (including our technology, how we dress, our job, our family), but our great focus is the return of Christ. The focus is so consuming that it will actually purify the one who hopes in His return. We are very soon going to see Jesus, our great God and Savior, face to face.

8 – I AM SOMETIMES REJECTED BECAUSE OF MY FAITH | “Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you” (1 Jn 3:13).

Jesus said, “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you” (Jn 15:18). Every true Christian should expect that his new pattern of life will be rejected in some way by the world. The apostle John says we should not be surprised.

² D. L. Moody. *The Greatest Sermons Ever Preached* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 180.

9 – I LOVE FELLOW CHRISTIANS | “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God” (1 Jn 4:7). “Everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him” (1 Jn 5:1). “...if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn 1:6).

Christ Himself had said earlier to the apostle John and the other eleven disciples, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). There are over 35 commands in the New Testament for Christians to live life together and serve “one another.”

10 – GOD ANSWERS MY PRAYERS | “We have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him” (1 Jn 3:21-22).

One who is genuinely born again has such a union and closeness with the Lord that he is constantly breathing out prayers to God and seeing those prayers answered on a continual basis. It is God’s indwelling Spirit, the Comforter, who compels the Christian to pray instead of fret in times of great trial.

We should remind ourselves often of Philippians 4:6-7, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

11 – I DISCERN TRUTH BY THE BIBLE | “We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 Jn 4:6).

True believers have the God-given discernment capability to tell when someone is teaching falsely especially when it comes to who Jesus is and what He has done on the Cross. The Bible – not feelings, trends, or what is “cool” – determines the standard of truth and practice. A person without God’s indwelling presence cannot discern the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:14) and is often drawn into error.

12 – I ENJOY THE COMFORT & CONVICTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT | “By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit” (1 Jn 4:13).

It is through the Spirit of God that we can believe and repent. He gives us a new heart and a new spirit by His Spirit (Eze 36:26-27). Through the Spirit, Christ’s presence is within me, and He says, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you*” (Heb 13:5). What comfort this is for the true Christian.

13 – I TRUST JESUS CHRIST AS MY KING | “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God” (1 Jn 5:1).

Believing Jesus means to trust Him your King to direct your every thought and action. Belief is more than intellectual understanding, but actually surrendering to Him as Christ (“the Anointed One”). To be anointed as Christ in the Bible is to be the Almighty King. As born-again people, we trust Christ as King to control and direct us.

14 – I PERSEVERE IN VICTORY OVER THE WORLD | “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world” (1 Jn 5:4).

A Christian will persevere in the love of God and holiness because of the Holy Spirit living in him or her. A justified person may fall, but they keep getting up by the grace of God.

15 – I HAVE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION | “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 Jn 5:13).

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These Fingerprints Don't Save Us

These marks of God in our life do not make us God's children, they show that we are God's children. The children of a mom and dad did nothing to gain the family likeness. Being “born” is a gift. And being “born again” into God's family is a gift from God. All the evidences listed in 1 John are a gift from Jesus.

St. Paul explains this in Titus 2:4-7, “For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

He tells us in Ephesians 2:8-10, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

What if I'm Not Sure?

Often in life we are on a sort of “hamster wheel” that is the same thing every day with very little purpose. One day we will have no more energy left, and the

hamster wheel will come to an end. As you know, none of us were meant to live merely for the "hamster wheel." We were made for more than this. If we are asleep to this greater purpose, we need to be awakened.

St. Paul says those who are spiritually dead have to be-come alive (Eph 2:1-7). How does one who is "dead in sins" become "alive in Christ"? How does one who has strayed from the Lord come back to Him or become a member of His family?

Remember, Salvation is a Love Story

Before you and your spouse can have lasting and meaningful love to give to one another, you need to first receive the fullness of God's love. God's love is a gift that you need to receive. Jesus told us that in order to receive His gift of salvation, we need to "repent" of ignoring God actively sinning against Him and "believe" that God sent His Son to die for our sins (Mk 1:15).

Christ Died for You

"God is love" (1 Jn 4:8), but this does not mean He lowers His standard of perfect holiness. God has provided a way to satisfy His holy nature and His righteous wrath against our sin. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet 3:18). Jesus Christ, God's perfect Son, was crucified in your place and paid the penalty of eternal hell for you, if you will believe. Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Lk 5:32). "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:6).

Jesus Gives Us His Perfect Record

God "made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). When you believe that Jesus died for your sins and took your punishment on the cross, God exchanges your record of sin with Jesus' perfect record of righteousness. You then have a perfect record for the Day of Judgment.

God Will Make You New!

When you believe in Christ, God also promises to transform you. He says, "...from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Eze 36:25-27). All who are part of God's kingdom have been born again. Jesus said, "unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:3).

How to Repent

Repenting to God does not mean we have to punish ourselves for our sin. To repent literally means “to have a new perspective.” If you are broken because of your sin and turn to Jesus for mercy, He will save you. Repent and turn to Him. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (Jas 4:9-10). Say to God, “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...” (Psa 51:4). Jesus says, “I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Lk 15:10).

Trust in Christ

Jesus says: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” (Jn 3:36). “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

Believe that Jesus gave His precious life’s blood for you. To you, right now, “the Holy Spirit says, Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...” (Heb 3:7-8).

St. John says: “But to all who did receive him [Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (Jn 1:12-13). “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:8-9). “And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price” (Rev 22:17).

Conclusion

For those who are truly born again, the fifteen marks mentioned here will begin to show up in your life. It is not that these marks are present in full maturity in the life of every believer. That is not the case. But there is some sign of each one of these marks in the life of every true believer. Each person will have different degrees of these evidences, but they will all be present in one form or another.

“This life, therefore, is not righteousness but growth in righteousness, not health but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished but it is going on. This is not the end but it is the road; all does not yet gleam in glory but all is being purified.” ~ Martin Luther³

³ Martin Luther. *Defense of All the Articles*, Lazareth transl., as found in Grace Brame, *Receptive Prayer* (Chalice Press, 1985) 119.