

DOING THE JESUS WALK

'Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed are those who take refuge in him.'¹ In what ways do you need to 'take refuge in God' today?

1 JOHN 2:3-17

Knowing God is not merely about claiming right doctrine or profound spiritual experiences. These have their place, but if in holding them we adopt a form of super-spirituality that has little impact on our relationships then we are a long way from putting into practice what John has to say in these verses. None of us is exempt from his hard-hitting message, no matter what our age or perceived Christian maturity. He addresses his opponents who claim that they know God but at the same time break his commandments. Since John considers knowledge of God practical and experiential, to claim to know God and at the same time to disobey his commandments is to lie and be devoid of all truth.² This passage is really quite unsettling, because if we claim to be Christians John is addressing us directly. Surely Christians don't hate? But the words 'love' and 'hate' here speak not so much of emotions but more of attitudes expressed in actions.³ I'm a 'middle way' sort of person, and can exasperate my friends who see the world in more black-and-white terms. However, I suspect that there's little middle ground in John's mind. There are, after all, only a few short steps between belittling, despising and hating someone. Darkness and light cannot coexist. Hate and love are mutually exclusive.

This is tough, demanding stuff for all of us. Spare a thought for those in church leadership. They can get badly knocked, yet are expected to continue to show love and acceptance even when 'their flock' cause deep hurt through their criticism or actions. To 'live as Jesus did' (v 6) in such circumstances can be costly, and it can be difficult to prevent pain and resentment building into something more overwhelming. Pray for and care for your leaders!

You may not always agree with your church leaders, but they do need your loving support. Prayerfully identify some practical ways to encourage them – and do them!

¹ Ps 34:8 ² *NIV Bible Commentary* ³ *NIV Study Bible*