



Jarod Piercey – just before he is baptized into Christ, with Brice Williams, Marvell Holder, Jeremy Ciaramella, and his father Rod Piercey.

1 John 2:1-2

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

The words “dear children” are one word in the Greek: “teknion” – “a little child/infant.” This is a little different than “teknon,” which means “child.” “Teknion” would be like Dimitry (toddler – notice the “i”). “Teknon” would be like Paisley (second-grader, notice no “i”). The word “Teknion” meaning “dear children” appears 9 times in the book of 1 John, over half of those occurrences are in chapter 2 alone.



Dimitry in the NICU, under the UV lights, mommy by his side.

John wrote this epistle, this letter, so that they would not sin. He’s trying to protect his “dear children” from the pain, anguish, and destruction that sin always ends up causing. Any parent in their right mind would do anything to protect their “dear children” from destruction. We would not hesitate to trade places with them when they are suffering. I remember Dimitry needing not just one, but three blood transfusions just to survive his severe anemia when he was born. It was very hard to see them taking his blood by piercing his feet and squeezing them every hour, him being fed through a tube through his nose into his stomach, and the doctor having to put the IV into an artery in his head to keep him alive. He was under the UV lights 24x7 and we could only hold him for a brief moment when they changed him and his bedding in the incubator, if that. All of this and we were certainly

“feeling it.” I can only imagine what God must have felt, his son did not “make it through.” Jesus was not being cared for, he was being condemned, mocked, shamed and brutalized. Why all that pain? So that we could be adopted, as “Dear Children.” So that instead of our destruction, condemnation, and eternal pain because of our own sin – we’d have the amazing privilege of being an adopted child of God.

Because of this amazing act of love and sacrifice – Jesus is our eternal *“defense attorney.”* (May not work with the song, “Jesus is my Friend” but it certainly works biblically!) He took the punished upon himself that brought us peace. The agony in Amy and I’s heart as our son went through a “near death” experience medically gives us a mere inkling of the agony in God’s heart what His son went through! Why? God loved us so much and was so determined to adopt us, to know us!

Which brings us to the real question, are we “Determined To Know Him?”

1 John 2:3-6

3 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 4 The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Can someone who does not obey Jesus’ commands know him? What if someone is unsure what Jesus’ commands are in the first place, can they truly obey them? Clearly not! Can someone who does not know Jesus go to heaven? Certainly not! Therefore, knowing Jesus’ commands AND obeying them is tantamount in knowing Jesus. What if someone says they know him and they even know Jesus’ commands – but don’t obey him? They are still a liar. The truth will only be in us when we obey Jesus’ commands, his Word. This makes sense, as Jesus taught in John 12:48 *“that very word which I spoke will condemn him on the last day!”* The Lord also made it clear in John 8:31-32, believing in him intellectually is not the same as knowing him, knowing the truth (Jesus, cf. John 14:6), and being set free from sins. *(To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my*

disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”).

I spent my early teen/college years laying claim to Christ, “believing in him”, reading the bible, going to church, praying regularly and so on. I’d been to a plethora of different churches and amassed an amalgam of varying beliefs from the smorgasbord of those experiences. I’d been cobbling together doctrines that “made sense to me” as I meandered through each different denomination. But when one sits down and takes an honest look at their life and doctrine (cf. 1 Tim 4:12) they can discern if they are actually “holding to [his] teachings”, being his “disciple” and thus “knowing” him, the “truth.” When I sat down to study the scriptures and took this honest look at my life and doctrine with real disciples it became painfully evident that I’d put words into Jesus’ mouth when it came to what a disciple was. I had my own definition of what a “Christian” was and what it mean to be the “*Dear Children*” of God! There was immorality, impurity, drunkenness and bitterness in me that went unchanged and unchecked by that potpourri of beliefs I’d amassed. I was shocked when the scriptures made it clear I was not a true disciple and thus not Christian! In my stunned arrogance I got angry and I wanted to blame the brothers exegesis and “murder the messengers.” However, the more I poured over the scriptures in search of proving my point, the more the LORD stared back at me confirming what I was too prideful to admit, that no “*wicked [person] will not inherit the kingdom of God!*” and that I must “*not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)



If you share your ice cream with me...“I’ll be your best friend!”

We usually say to someone when we are younger *"I'll be your best friend!"* when we want them to do something for us! If you share your ice cream with me, *"I'll be your best friend!"* Jesus promises us clearly that we'll be in his love and his Father's love when we obey him - John 14:15 *"If you love me, you will obey what I command"* and John 14:21 *"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."* You want to be loved by Jesus and his Father!? Do you think those that do not love Jesus are going to spend eternity with him? Can those that do not obey Jesus, therefore - do not love him, and thus - are not loved by the Father, dwell eternally with them? Our priority needs to be having (thus knowing), and obeying (thus knowing Jesus) his word, his command. As the song goes, *"My friend, Jesus is my friend..."* but only if you do what he says! *"You are my friends if you do what I command."* (John 15:14)

If you claim to know Jesus, then you must walk as Jesus did! (cf. 1 John 2:6) You must hold to his purpose (Mark 1:16-18, Luke 19:10), his message (Matthew 4:17), and his standard (Luke 14:25-33, John 13:34-35). If you are his friend, you *go after* what he commands. The more valued/deep a friendship with someone, the more you want their approval and unity with them. The more valued a friendship, the more we become like that person naturally over time. The scriptures are clear, *"bad company corrupts good character"* (cf. 1 Cor 15:33) so the inverse is true, *"good company purifies bad character."* We all want to be loved. We need friendship and love to be given to us and for us to give it to others. We are inherently build this way in our "DNA." (cf. *"What a man desires is unfailing love, better to be poor than a liar."* - Proverbs 19:22) Everybody Needs Your Love! Not just Jesus, not just God, but every single brother and sister in the church needs to be valued, cherished, and held "dear" to you.



Amy Ciaramella, Nubian Thompson, Danielle Savedra, and Sandy Lunde celebrate our sister Dani's restoration!

What an amazing couple of months it has been in the Kingdom of God here in Phoenix! It was astonishing and moving to see our newest disciple added to the Kingdom and the newly formed "Young and Faithful" teen ministry! We are so grateful to God for moving in Jarod Piercey's heart and for the privilege of seeing him baptized this past Sunday! He certainly is

“Dear” as one of the four “Children” of the Piercey family, and of the whole church family! Sharil shared powerfully how God saved this wonderful son of hers from self-destructive thoughts and changed his heart greatly. Rod spoke humbly and lifted up his son, encouraging him with vision, and reminding him that today he’s “honoring his Father...and me as well!” Marvell (our Campus/Teen Intern) asked those two fateful questions with tears streaming down his face, which spoke more powerfully than any words about how “dear” our newest brother is to him.



John and Judy Morris have some serious connections with the LORD on the “Other Side!”

One of our congregational prayers is that many will be restored to the faith this year and come back to the family of God, getting back in the battle against darkness. It was such a joy to see Danilla Savedra restored in February! We missed her warmth, her heart for God and her love in the family and are so encouraged she has come back and is going after loving the lost, God’s people, and our heavenly Father! Also in February at a men’s midweek service our dear brother John Morris spoke powerfully, honestly and humbly about his time away from the body. John shared what he learned about the truth of how someone is saved and how he realized profoundly after “church shopping” he desperately needed to get back to the church that teaches it! Yet another prayer goal has been answered by our God and had 201 people at our last “Bring Your Neighbor Day” service, smashing our previous record! Additionally, brothers and sisters have “stepped-up” in their giving and our pledges are now over 4,300\$ and we’ve raised through and for our God about 20% of our missions and turned it all in *early!*

Amy and I are so encouraged and inspired by the Phoenix brothers and sisters, “Dear

Children” indeed to one another and especially to our God - to him be all the Glory!



Jeremy Ciaramella