

INTRODUCTION

I'm beginning a series through this wonderful book written by the beloved disciple John. Let me give you a little introduction to the book of 1 John. Any time you study a book, you should look for any keys or themes running through it. John takes four specific times to tell us why he has written this book and we're going to look at that by way of introduction.



To promote joy

"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin." (1 John 2:1). One of the purposes of 1 John is to promote Christian joy.



To produce purity

"I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray." (1 John 2:26). The second purpose of the book is to produce purity. We do not believe that a Christian can become sinless but we do believe the more you grow as a believer, the less you will sin. The Bible says "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11)



To protect us from error

"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1). The third purpose of the book is to protect us from error to protect us from error.



To provide assurance of our salvation

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:13) For the fourth time we see this phrase, "I'm writing" or "I write this to you." The fourth and perhaps the main purpose of the book is to provide assurance of our salvation. The word "know" appears over 30 times in these five chapters and I hope by the time we end this study of 1 John if somebody asks you if you going to heaven when you die, I hope you won't say, "I hope so" or "I think so." I hope you'll say, "I KNOW so!"

With those four purposes in mind, let's go back now to chapter 1 and talk about what I'm calling our life in Christ. What does it mean to be a Christian? The difference between the apostle of 1 John and The Gospel according to John is John wrote the Gospel according to John to non-believers, so people would believe. He wrote 1 John to believers.

1 John 1:1-4. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus, Christ. We write this to make our joy complete."

There are three characteristics of a growing Christian. Are you a growing Christian or are you a stagnated, carnal Christian?

I. A growing Christian accepts the reality of Jesus

John starts out by saying Jesus is real. Why does he have to tell us Jesus is real? Just about every epistle was written to try to combat a common heresy or error and in the early church there was something called the Gnostic Heresy or Gnosticism. Those of you who teach Sunday morning Bible study have probably read that from Dr. Hobbs and others. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means "knowledge." Gnosticism said there was a way to know something mystical and supernatural about Jesus Christ and the Gnostics did not believe Jesus was real in the flesh; they denied the humanity of Jesus. What they believed sounds almost New Age to me. They believed the Spirit of Christ, who the Messiah, did not dwell in Jesus of Nazareth. They believed Jesus of Nazareth was a normal human being until age 30. The Gnostics believed when Jesus was baptized and the Bible says the Holy Spirit came upon him was the moment when Christ came upon Jesus of Nazareth and that's when he became Jesus the Christ.

They also taught and believed that that mysterious, spiritualistic Jesus was the real Messiah, the Jesus in the flesh wasn't the son of God and they also taught and believed that when Jesus was crucified on the cross and gave up his Spirit, that's when the spirit of Christ left and no longer was Jesus the Son of God. So it was a mystical type of belief and not too different than the New Age movement today that talks about spirits roaming around that can inhabit a person and how you can channel through that. Be careful of that. But that's what the Gnostics taught, so John wrote to Christians to straighten that error. Jesus is real—you've got to accept the humanity and reality of Jesus. John tells us three ways in which Jesus is real.

A. Jesus is real eternally

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life." Jesus has always been; of course, Jesus was unique and different. When you go back to the beginning, but you really can't go back to the beginning, because whenever you think you're at the beginning, there's still something before that and this just boggles the human mind. We cannot conceive it. Our mental computers go into overload when we try to think of eternity but John is saying Jesus existed from the very beginning. The Bible says, "From everlasting to everlasting you are God." (Psalm 90:2) Jesus Christ has always existed.

If verse one sounds familiar, there are two other places in the Bible that are similar to this. Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 both start with the phrase, "In the beginning." Jesus has always been. He is eternal. You can never find a time when Jesus did not exist and he is real eternally now.

Why does the Bible say Jesus is the Word of life? One of the two Greek words for "word" is *logos*, which means "the concept of," where we get our word technology. Any word that has -ology on the end comes from *logos*. A word is an expression of a thought without words we can't express our feelings without words we cannot express our thoughts. For example, I'm thinking of something right now in my mind but nobody here knows what it is. I don't think

anybody would guess what it is but if I give you the word, you know the concept. Here's the word: Watermelon. When God had a thought in his mind he wanted to communicate, the best way he had to communicate was Jesus Christ. Jesus is the expression of God's heart; Jesus is the expression of God's mind—that's why he is called the *logos*, the word.

B. Jesus is real historically

There are two ways you can err when it comes to the person of Jesus. You can err on the side that says he was 100% divine and not really human or you could error on the side that said he was 100% human and only partially divine. You can also error by saying he was 50% divine and 50% human. All of those are wrong. Jesus Christ was 100% divine and 100% man. He was real historically, meaning he was a human being: He got tired, he got hungry, he hurt just like we hurt.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched." John is trying to combat this Gnostic heresy by saying Jesus Christ had flesh and blood. Wouldn't it have been something to hear the voice of Jesus? What do you think his voice sounded like? We don't know but John heard his voice and I imagine that voice echoed through his ears for the rest of his life. Jesus must have had a booming voice, because those 5,000 people at the Feast of Tabernacles heard him say, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." (John 7:37) John said he was real. We heard his voice. We saw him with our eyes. We touched him with our hands. Even after Jesus came back from the dead and appeared in the upper room Jesus said, "Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have. (Luke 24:39)

C. Jesus is real personally

John said he knew him. "We proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us." Christianity is not keeping a code or creed. Christianity is knowing Jesus Christ and you can know him personally by looking at those three things: eternally, historically and personally. You can say two of those about a lot of people. For example, you can say George Bush is real historically, but I wonder how many of you know him personally. Or you could say George Washington was real historically but how many of you know him personally? Nobody did. He was dead before any of us came along. Only about Jesus Christ can you say he was real eternally, historically and you can know him personally.

Do you know Jesus Christ or do you just know about him? Is he just some historical figure like Socrates or Plato or do you really know him? That's what the Christian life is all about. Paul says, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection." (Philippians 3:10) To do this, you've got to accept the reality of Jesus.

II. A GROWING CHRISTIAN APPRECIATES HIS/HER RELATIONSHIP THROUGH JESUS

If you're a Christian, not only do you have to accept who Jesus is, but you also understand and appreciate your relationship you have through Jesus. John says in verse three, "We proclaim to

you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." The word fellowship there is *Koinonia*. *Koinonia* means sharing, intimate affection. It means something that goes deeper than friendship.

Every time I gather together with believers I think about what a wonderful fellowship we have in Christ, the kind of fellowship we experience as Christians doesn't exist in a fraternity, sorority, country club or a civic club. You don't find this kind of fellowship anywhere else on the face of the earth except the fellowship among Christian believers.

A. Through Jesus, we enjoy fellowship with the family

Someone said fellowship is just two fellows in the same ship and we're all in the ship of the Lord Jesus. We have entered into him and were in it together now, because I'm a believer and God is my father and because you're a believer and God is your father, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. So the first aspect of our relationship is we have fellowship with the family.

I like to sing that song, "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God," but allow me to correct a widespread misconception that says everybody on the face of the earth belongs to one family. We like to talk about that and humanists like to talk about the family of man and it sounds good and logical and reasonable, but Jesus never recognized the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. Jesus said there are two families. He mentions this when he said to the Pharisees, "You belong to your father, the devil." (John 8:44) The truth of the matter is every one of us was born in the wrong family and only through a new birth are we born into the right family, the family of God. In fact the Bible says once you come to know Christ, that's when you're in the family. When he adopts you as a child, that's when you become a child of God. I can have fellowship with anyone who is a believer and I have an intimate bond with them because of Jesus. I get along better with a believer who may not be just like me or I'd get along better with a believer who may be black than a white guy who's lost. I'd get along better with a Russian who's saved than an America who's lost. That's the truth. Because of that fellowship we have in Christ, it's something you cannot explain.

B. Through Jesus, we enjoy fellowship with the Father

The Bible says our fellowship is with the father and with his son Jesus Christ. Because God made us different, we can fellowship with him. The Bible says, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what to righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship [*Koinonia*] can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15) Those verses are talking about our relationships. I believe you cannot have fellowship with an unbeliever; you may have a friendship with an unbeliever, and I think we ought to cultivate friendships with lost people and try to draw them to Christ. Jesus was a friend of publicans and sinners but he couldn't have fellowship with them. The Bible says you cannot have fellowship with lost people.

If you are a teenager and a believer, make your mind up right now that you're only going to marry a Christian. Do not be yoked together with an unbeliever and those of you who are choosing your friends understand that you can be a friend with someone is not a Christian but you really can't have fellowship with them, because the Bible says what fellowship can light have with darkness? I think you ought to be a friend to that person so you can win that person to Christ. Outside the family of God, there's no fellowship but in the family there's wonderful fellowship.

What does our fellowship with the Father represent? There is a horizontal Koinonia we have among ourselves. We enjoy getting together with Sunday school classes and having parties and enjoying each other. Christian Fellowship is important but then there is that vertical relationship, vertical Koinonia, with the Father that a lot of people are missing out on. Some people love to get together and have fun with each other, but did you know you could have the same kind of intimate sharing with the Father and with the Lord Jesus Christ? Through prayer you speak to God and through his word he speaks to you. In order to make your life balanced there must be a vertical Koinonia and a horizontal Koinonia.

III. A GROWING CHRISTIAN IS ACTIVELY REJOICING IN JESUS

John says, "We write this to make our joy complete." Like we use to say in South Alabama, he wants your joy to be slap-dab full! Part of your inheritance as a believer is the joy of the Lord. The Christian life is just not a lot of giddiness and giggling all the time; but the Christian life is a life of joy. The Bible says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4) One time I went through the entire Bible and isolated every single Scripture that had something to do with joy, rejoicing or something to do with being of good cheer. There are 794 scriptures that talk about rejoicing, having joy and being of good cheer. The Bible is full of the admonition to let our joy be full now.

Whenever the Queen is in residence at Buckingham palace, her royal standard flies above Buckingham palace so everyone will know she is there. If Jesus Christ is in your heart there should be a flag flying over your life and that flag is the flag of joy. People ought to be able to look at you and know that the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is in residence in your life because of your joy. And there are three things you have to rejoice about.

A. Salvation

Salvation produces joy. "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (Isaiah 12:3) Salvation is something that refreshes you; like going to a cool well of water, and receiving it ought to give you joy all the time.

When was just the last time you just got so happy in the Lord did you just want to shout, "Hallelujah!"? I've done a lot of study of Baptists in history books and did you know about 100 years ago, Baptists were widely known as "shouting Baptists"? Many times, Baptists got so emotional and so happy in the Lord, they'd just shout to the Lord. In fact, I have also read the history of a lot of local Baptist Churches. In the church I served in Gardendale, Alabama, it is said in the 1880s when they had prayer meetings, the men would go down in some woods on one

side of the hill and the women would go down in the woods on the other side of the hill. This account said the shouts of joy from those prayer meetings would echo all around the city. They were just so happy in the Lord they shouted. I don't know whatever happened to shouting Baptists but I'll tell you, sometimes I feel like shoutin'.

I read a book called *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*. Billy Bray lived in Cornwall, United Kingdom. Billy was such a dynamic witness, he could not be detained nor deterred and he was happy about the Lord. He was always shouting in church and disrupting the services. They couldn't carry on. He honestly had a pure heart and would get so happy in the Lord he'd just shout, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" Finally it was decided something had to be done about Billy Bray. One Sunday night, he was put in the pastor's office. They wouldn't even give him a Bible, because he could read it and start shouting. So they gave him the dullest, driest book they could think of—a book on world geography and told him to read it. Service continued peacefully with Billy in the back office. But all of a sudden, they heard it: "Hallelujah! Praise God! Hallelujah!" Exasperated, they brought him out saying, "Billy Bray, what in the world are you shouting about?" Billy said, "It's right here in this geography book I read. It says the deepest point in the ocean is 8 miles deep and then I thought about that scripture that says he's buried my sins in the depths of the sea and I just had to say 'Hallelujah! Hallelujah!'" I like somebody like that that gets happy about the Lord.

Don't be so surprised if you see me driving around the loop some time all by myself with a big smile on my face singing out loud, because I do that sometimes. I'm just so happy in the Lord I have a song in my heart. Why? Because he saved me. That produces joy.

B. The Word of God

"The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes." (Psalm 19:8) Have you discovered when you are feeling low or discouraged that you can take the word of God, especially the book of Psalms, and just start reading out loud some of those affirmations of praise and before you know it the joy of the Lord is back in your heart? The word of God really will produce joy in your life according to what it says about itself.

C. Leading others to Christ

If you really want to be happy in the Lord, actively lead people to Christ. "He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him." (Psalm 126:6) I grew up in a church where we kept singing about "bringing in the sheets, "bringing in the sheets." I wondered why we wanted to bring the sheets in off the line. I later learned we were singing bringing in the *sheaves*, based on this passage of scripture. It's a beautiful promise that says when we go out bearing the wonderful seed of the word of God weeping, brokenhearted, that we'll come again with songs of joy.

If you ask God to lay some person on your heart that's not a Christian to the point where you even shed tears over that person and you'd do anything you could to bring that person to Christ, and then a few months later after you've witnessed to that person and planted every seed you

could in that person's life, you see that person come to know the Lord and get baptized—I guarantee there will be songs of joy on your lips.

CONCLUSION

When I was in college I was actively involved in the Fellowship of Christian athletes. I went around and spoke at a lot of conferences. I never really knew much good that came out of it but here about two years ago I was invited to preach at a little country church up outside Arab, Alabama. It was a small country church that probably only had about 50 or 60 people.

I went to preach there on a Tuesday night during their revival. I didn't know the pastor, but he was a fairly young man named Dan Martin. That night before I spoke, I met him in his study before the service. He looked at me and said, "You don't remember me do you?" I had to say, "No, I'm sorry, I don't know you." He said, "Do you remember about ten years ago you spoke at an FCA camp down at Montgomery, Alabama? The Friday night when you gave the invitation, some guys came forward and were saved. I was one of the guys that came forward that night and you opened your Bible and you shared with me and I invited Christ into my heart. I haven't seen you since, but I just want you to know I've grown in the Lord and he called me to preach. I attended Southwestern Seminary and now I'm pastor of this little church."

I want to tell you what joy came into my heart to realize I had a small part in leading him to Christ and it produced such joy in me. Any of you who've ever had the privilege of leading someone to Christ knows there is no other joy that compares. Jesus said there is joy in the presence of angels over one sinner who repents. Let's rejoice in the lord.

OUTLINE

The goals of our study of 1 John (The four "keys" to unlock its treasures)

- A. To promote joy
 - B. To produce purity
 - C. To protect us from error
 - D. To provide assurance of our salvation
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I. A GROWING CHRISTIAN ACCEPTS THE REALITY OF JESUS

Jesus is real

- A. Eternally
- B. Historically
- C. Personally

II. A GROWING CHRISTIAN APPRECIATES HIS/HER RELATIONSHIP THROUGH JESUS

Through Jesus, we enjoy fellowship (*Koinonia*) with

- A. The family
- B. The Father

III. A GROWING CHRISTIAN IS ACTIVELY REJOICING IN JESUS

Joy producers:

A. Salvation

"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." *Isaiah 12:3*

B. The Word of God

"The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes." *Psalms 19:8*

C. Leading others to Christ

"He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him." *Psalms 126:6*

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David O. Dykes, Pastor
Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes