

Study Guide



1 John 1:1-4

"The Word of Life"

August 28, 2016

Welcome (40 Minutes)

Be intentional...

Worship (5 Minutes)

As the group transitions from a time of fellowship to a time of intentional study of the word, it is important to facilitate that transition with a time of worship. This can look like praying together, singing songs together, or rejoicing in what the Lord has done throughout the week.

Word (45 Minutes)

Our pastor pointed out last week that the purpose of 1st John is to know that our faith is authentic. John is writing this Epistle to a growing church that has had members defect because of false teaching. John wants to reassure them that the foundation established by Scripture is enough.

In these passages (and in other passages to follow) the writer uses the pronoun "we" to describe his experiences. The writer himself has had an eyewitness experience with Jesus Christ, but if it was only him, his claims could be disputed. The fact that others had the same experience as the writer affirms the authenticity of the testimony.

For more in depth study check out the following pages...

Walk Prayer & Missions

August—Be Intentional
October 12-22—South Sudan
December 18-28—South Sudan

Calendar

September 18th—Connection Group Starts
November 13th—Orphan Sunday

Welcome (40 Minutes)

As you fellowship with one another, please be intentional about sharing what the Lord is doing in your lives. Get to know one another and encourage one another. Are your conversations pointing one another toward Jesus?

Worship (5 Minutes)

If you are looking for a song to sing this week, here are the lyrics to “The Wondrous Cross” (one of the songs David Granger will lead us in this week):

*There is a love so sure
Nothing it can't endure
There is a life it brings
That's greater than anything*

*I once was dead within
Hollowed by all my sin
Lost and so led astray*

*But Your love reached all the way
Your love reached all the way...*

*Oh, the wondrous Cross
Where the Prince of Glory died
Oh, the glorious Cross
Where Your mercy bled for us*

*You overcame the grave, waking to a world You saved
Oh, the wondrous Cross*

*Now You're my resting place
When trouble I must face
I won't be overwhelmed*

*Jesus, Your love has won
And my faith looks up to Thee
Sweet Lamb of Calvary*

*My song will ever rise
To You alone
Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Worthy is the Lamb*

Word (45 Minutes)

I. The Beginning (vs. 1a)

1 John 1:1 begins with the phrase “That which was from the beginning.” John in his gospel begins with the phrase **“In the beginning.”**

In John’s gospel, the context of the verse clearly points out that the beginning refers to the time before the creation of the world. In 1 John, however, the context of these passages shows just as clearly that “beginning” begins with **the coming of Christ to Earth as God Incarnate.**

Reinforcing their view, and also providing support for the eyewitness testimony, are the sensory descriptions that John utilizes.

II. Eyewitness Accounts (vs. 1b-2)

The first sensory description is that John and his colleagues (we) claim to have **heard the Word of life.** This by itself provides some credibility to the Incarnate God, but it should be noted several people in the Old Testament had experiences hearing God speak. Hearing the Word of life could also be interpreted as hearing the Word being verbally communicated.

A higher level of authenticity is arrived at though when John says that **“we have seen with our eyes which we have looked at.”** Literally, John is saying we were eyewitnesses to the **“Word of Life.”** From an evidence perspective, eyewitness testimony is considered highly reliable – particularly if the eyewitness testimony is confirmed by numerous witnesses.

John makes his testimony even more reliable when he writes **“our hands have touched.”** This phrase refers to an actual physical touching, and in order for something to be touched, it must have a physical form.

The writer then writes that because of the experience that they **“proclaim”** the reality of the **“Word of Life.”**

Verse two begins with the phrase **“The life appeared.”** In John’s gospel, he wrote in John 1:14 **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”** Jesus Christ really existed. His appearances, both before and after the resurrection, are well documented by a number of sources.

John goes on to reaffirm that they have seen Christ – and because of their experiences they can give testimony to the authenticity of Jesus Christ. In essence, Christ was revealed to a few to be communicated to many, and that is exactly what John is doing here. Howard Marshall in his commentary notes that “his (John’s) emphasis is not on the act of proclamation but on the historical reality of that to which he bears witness...”

III. Fellowship (vs. 3-4)

John also reminds the reader that Jesus Christ represents eternal life. We must remember, John saw the empty grave and the resurrected Christ. Therefore, he could give unequivocal testimony to the fact that Christ conquered death.

John proclaims what he has seen and heard so that the church in question **“may have fellowship with us.”** Perhaps the simplest translation of the Greek Word for fellowship is provided by the commentator Colen Kruse who writes “Fellowship renders a Greek Word which literally means – having in common.”

John goes on to write that believers also have fellowship with God the Father with his son Jesus Christ. The key to being in Christian fellowship is having in common our union with Jesus Christ. That union is expressed corporately at Norris Ferry through our worship, ministry experiences and community groups. We each have different gifts and life experiences that make us unique – but we also proclaim that our personal union with Christ is the only way to salvation and the common ground to our fellowship.

John concludes the introduction of the 1st Chapter in verse 4 by writing **“We write this to make our joy complete.”** John, as a minister of the gospel, had a genuine concern that those he ministered to would be able to experience the full blessings of their relationship with God through his Son Jesus Christ. The fulfillment of this blessing is what would make John’s joy complete.

IV. Summary

In closing, there are several important points that John is making in these four verses:

1) As believers we must remember that our faith is centered solely on our union with Jesus Christ. This is as important today as it was then. There always has been, and always will be, external forces claiming that following other paths will lead to an enhanced spiritual experience and eternal life.

Our culture today often attempts to emphasize spiritual unity. However, there can only be spiritual unity where Christ, and Christ alone, is the focus and source of salvation.

2) As believers, we must also be reminded that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has been the subject of numerous eyewitness accounts. These passages point out the fact John and others heard Christ speak, saw Christ live, and literally touched His flesh.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul writes that it was of “first” importance that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose on the third day. Paul then goes on to write that more than 500 people – most of whom were still living – were witnesses to resurrected Christ.

3) The final point that is clear in these four verses is that we, as believers, are to give testimony to that which we have experienced. Being united with Christ by grace and through faith is a transformational experience. We should, as John did, proclaim to others that which we have experienced. Just as the original disciples shared their experience with Christ, so should we.

Sermon Questions

What Does it Say?

1. John does not identify who or what he is talking about in verse 1. He just uses the words “that which”. What aspects of his unidentified subject does he emphasize in verse 1?
2. Verse 2 is like a parenthesis between verses 1 and 3. What does John say in verse 2 about the life that was made manifest?
3. In verse 2 what is the relationship between seeing the life and testifying to it? Also in verse 2 what is the difference between testifying to the life and proclaiming the life.
4. In verse 3 and 4 John gives the purpose for proclaiming the word of life and writing this letter to them. What is (are) the purposes?

Sermon Questions

What Does it Mean?

1. Who or what is John talking about in the first 4 phrases in verse 1? To help answer this question, also read John 1:1-4, 14.
2. Why is it significant and important that Jesus existed with the Father from all eternity?
3. Why is it important that Jesus physically came to earth in history to become a man? Also look at Hebrews 1:1-3 in connection with this question.
4. What do you think John might be referring to in verse 1 when he says, “Which we looked upon and have touched with our hands”? Look at John 20:26-29 in connection with this question.

5. John says that “we proclaim to you the eternal life.” What are some necessary prerequisites to be able to “proclaim” the “word of life”?

6. In verse 3 John says that the purpose for proclaiming the word of life is that they will have fellowship with fellow believers. Then he ties that fellowship with each other into fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Why is fellowship with The Father and The Son essential for fellowship with each other? Look at John 17:21-22 to help answer this question.

7. Regarding verse 4, some translations say, “so that our joy may be complete” and others say, “so that your joy may be complete.” Can you think of ways that both of these translations could be valid?

Sermon Questions

How Does it Apply?

1. Think about the historical Jesus—the one the apostles heard and saw and touched and watched perform miracles. Think about their being with him for 40 days after his resurrection and receiving their commission to be his witnesses throughout the world. Think about God communicating himself through His Son becoming a man. How do these truths make Christianity different from the other religions of the world?

2. What are some significant implications concerning God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit enjoying close fellowship with each other from all eternity? How does that affect our fellowship with God and with each other?

NOTES:

Walk (30 minutes)

After enjoying times of fellowship, worship, and time in God's word together, it is now time to pray together as a group and encourage one another in the faith. It is very easy for this portion of the group time to be consumed by the other portions. However, this segment of the group time is crucially important. It answers the question, how do we apply what we are learning in 1 John to our lives today?

Many groups have found that it is helpful to sometimes break up into a men's group and a women's group for the purpose of being able to be more transparent and honest as we encourage one another and keep one another accountable. I would encourage you to try this in your groups.

In addition to praying for, and encouraging, one another, this portion of the group time should also be used for planning how your group can participate in God's work outside the walls of our church – "neighbors and nations." Discuss with your group some ideas on how you can be intentional with building relationships with your neighbors and co-workers. What can your Community Group do to impact the area around you?

May the Lord bless and encourage you as you lead your groups! Know that we are praying for you on a weekly basis and that we are here to help you in any way that we can!

What does it say?

1. He emphasizes that it was from the beginning—eternal in nature and that it has been physically revealed—by sight, by hearing, and by touch.
2. John says that “the life” is eternal (with the Father from the beginning) and has been physically manifested to them. They have seen it, testify to it, and proclaim it.
3. If you see something with your eyes, you are qualified to be a witness. Proclaiming is boldly speaking out about something. Testifying is talking about the facts when asked. Proclaiming is positively and boldly speaking out about the significance of the facts.
4. The purposes for proclaiming the “word of life” are (a) promoting fellowship with each other through fellowship with the Father and with the Son and (b) completing their joy.

What does it mean?

1. John is surely talking about Jesus in the first phrases of verse 1. Notice the similarities with how John starts the Gospel of John (John 1:1-4 and 14). In his gospel John also emphasizes that Jesus was with God in the beginning and the life was in him. He also emphasized in verse 12 that Jesus became flesh and lived among men.
2. If Jesus is God, then he had to exist with God the Father from all eternity. This shows that God is a relational God—He had fellowship with the Son (and the Spirit) from the beginning as implied in Genesis 1:26 where God said “let us make man in our own image.”
3. God, the Father, used the incarnation of the Son to communicate to men what he is like (Hebrews 1:1-3). He lived a perfect life as a man so that he was qualified to be a perfect sacrifice for the sins of mankind. He is our high priest who is able to sympathize with us because he was tempted in all things like we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15-16).
4. John was probably referring to their experience of being with Jesus for 40 days after the resurrection and being able to confirm that he indeed was a risen man and not a spirit. This was especially true for Thomas when Jesus invited him to place his finger in the nail prints in his hands and put his hand in his side where he was pierced with a sword.
5. Two prerequisites for proclaiming the “word of life”—the gospel are (a) great personal faith and confidence in the truth of the Gospel and (b) being commissioned by Jesus to proclaim the Gospel in the world starting at Jerusalem (Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8).
6. Our closeness and fellowship with each other is based upon each of us being united with Jesus. John 17:21 Jesus prays, “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”
7. If the church heeded this letter from John, their joy would be full. If their joy became full, John would also experience fullness of joy.