

1 John 1:1-4 ▪ Essential Truth

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Truth; Life; Christ

Intro to 1 John shows how essential truth about Jesus is to assurance

Intro: Do you ever ask yourself why you do the things you do? I've asked myself that about preaching.

Thankfully, I don't need to deal with an existential crisis.

2 Tim. 4 tells me enough.

2 Timothy 4:1–2 ESV

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

- › Preachers preach because there is essential truth about Jesus.
- › Preachers preach because Jesus Christ is real; there is a real second coming—a real future judgment.

Preaching prepares us to meet him and love his appearing. (2 Tim 4:8)

- Tradition has it that John served in an apostolic-pastoral role in Ephesus sometime after 70AD.
- He was up against people who denied the truth and reality of the Lord Jesus Christ

So he begins this letter very directly—even unconventionally without a formal introduction

Essential Truth about Jesus:

- 1 John is written polemically, pastorally and poetically.
- Polemic is defending the truth.
- Pastorally—shepherd.

People are sometimes even confused with what a shepherd looks like.

A shepherd is not a guy who merely has good bedside manner.

- › A shepherd is a man who makes a pre-emptive attack when he sees wolves coming.

Acts 20:29–30 ESV

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

- Unlike Acts, it's hard to see a clear structure in 1 John—but there are 3 distinct themes that resurface in a poetic parallelism to the letter.

1 Truth— Truth about Jesus is not up for grabs; it's clearly revealed.

2 Behavior—Christians behave in a certain way, distinct from the world.

3 Love—The clearest mark of a Christians is how they love other Christians.

- The first 4 verses of intro focus on Essential truth.

1. From the beginning (eternal)

- Right out of the gate, 1 John teaches and affirms that Jesus is “from the beginning”.
- Similar to the way John's Gospel speaks of Jesus.

John 1:1–3 ESV

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

- › When John uses “Word”, Word refers to the preincarnate Jesus. Jesus as he existed for all eternity.

Yet God is so good that he does not keep his truth about who he is hidden and concealed, but reveals it to us.

1 John 1:2 CSB

that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—

Truth is revealed two ways:

- Through the testimony of the eyewitness—i.e. Apostle John
- To us revealed clearly in the Word of God

Some years ago, I was talking to religious man who denied the Trinity—denied Jesus was eternally God.

After he realized he was not getting anywhere with me he said: Just set the whole trinity thing aside, pray, and ask God to reveal himself to you.

The question: How is God going to reveal himself? Through a dream or vision. In my feelings?

- › God has revealed himself —first through the eyewitnesses; then clearly in the Word of God.

Revelation 22:18 ESV

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.

We can have confidence that the Jesus we see in the Bible is the real Jesus—our call is to embrace him by faith and love.

The real Jesus also has:

2. Flesh and blood (humanity)

- I introduced last week in 2 John, there was a form of early Gnosticism which denied Jesus had a true humanity.
- John makes it clear that Jesus was a real flesh and blood human who talked and experienced real physical life. The Word took personal form that could be seen, heard, touched.

John 1:14 ESV

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:18 ESV

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

1. Do I believe this and confess?

(Nicene Creed --325AD)

*Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,
and was made human.*

Sanctity of Life Sunday

- Many churches have marked today as sanctity of Life Sunday. Every year that I've been in the pulpit, I've devoted a message, or part of it to the Sanctify of Human Life.

The Puritan pastor John Flavel reflects on God's hand of providence in the womb.

"We cannot therefore but admire the tender care of Providence over us...He preserved you there there to the fulness of time, and when that time was come brought you safely into that place in the world which He from eternity prepared for you."

› **That should remind us of the immense value of life inside of the womb.**

Word News states the following stats in the Jan 30 issues under *Missing Children*.

— For every 1000 live births in the US there are 189 abortions.

—In DC, the numbers rises to a shocking 518.

— 40% of abortions are now done chemically, not surgically.

"Although CDC figures show a 22 percent decline in abortions since 2009, there is also a 120 percent increase in the use of chemical abortions.

The agency has reported 619,591 abortions in 2018, but that is a significant undercount because reporting is voluntary."

Brothers as sisters, while these numbers are a reality, we still have work to do. Prayer; participating in work that advances the cause of life and stand up for justice for the unborn.

› **The Word of Life spent his 9months in the womb just like we all do.**

It should blow us away when we think about the nature of Jesus.

When Jesus was inside of the womb, He was at the same time sustaining all things with his powerful Word.

Hebrews 1:3 CSB

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

- Remember, John affirms the truth about Jesus with *eyewitness testimony*.
- He would remember when Jesus walked on water:

Matthew 14:28–33 ESV

And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

—Even in this account we have a picture of the divine and human natures at work.

- And what is the result? Worship.

When we believe essential truth about Jesus, that ought to be our response also.

Doctrine is meant to drive us to our knees.

One commentator:

“Familiarity with such verses must not blunt the awe of such reality.”

3. Fellowship

- Letters have a purpose.
- 1 John includes several purpose statements—this one is the first.

Why?

John writes so that we can know and experience true fellowship.

- First, we need to get the word right

I’ve heard John MacArthur say that the word fellowship to many Christians is drinking fruit punch and eating stale cookies after church. In the South it would be Sweet Tea and Mac and Cheese.

Either way that misses the heart of fellowship.

- It’s a familiar Gk. word *koinonia*.

Def. Fellowship: close association involving mutual interests and sharing.

- The way it’s used in the Bible carries with it the idea of a legally binding relationship.

It was used in classical Greek for a marriage relationship—the most intimate relationship that can be had—which is a legally binding one.

It could also describe two business partners...like two shareholders in the fishing business who split their resources to buy a boat and nets.

The commitment and cost is very high.

It can also be translated “communion”.

1. Fellowship has a truth standard. Only people who believe certain truth proclaimed, can have fellowship.
2. Fellowship. There is a vertical and horizontal element.

The vertical fellowship is what makes the horizontal one possible.

Final purpose: *complete joy*.

—John writes to ensure the joy of people he loves.

It's places like this in the Bible that cause us to ask: where are we looking for joy?

It's like when we walk into a store and someone immediately asks us: can I help you find something?

It's like the Bible whispers that to us over and over again. Can I help you find something?

Are you searching for joy? Lacking it? Close communion with God and His people are the path to completing joy.

Conclusion

There is a story about a dad who was trying to read the newspaper but his child kept asking him to play. To buy some time, the dad took a page that had a picture of the world from his newspaper, tore it into little pieces, and told his son to pretend it's a puzzle.

When he got done with the puzzle the dad said he would play.

After a quick minute the kid was done. The dad was pretty amazed and asked how he finished so quickly.

The little kid said: it was easy. There was also a picture of a man.

He knew that if he got the man right, the world would be right.

Essential Truth.

It's only when we see the man right, we can see our world right.