

We have spent the last 17 months in the Gospel of John. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. It seems that whatever book of the Bible I am preaching on becomes my favorite, at least until I start the next one. That is because the more we dig into God's word, the more we see, and the more it means to us personally. I have read that Gospel all my life, but it means so much more to me now. I've gone back and read over some of the sermons and been inspired all over again. I hope that you will use the sermons on the web as a resource to refresh your memory and go over the lessons we have learned. Sometimes we forget some of the challenges the Holy Spirit has presented to us and we need the reminder. (Hebrews 2:1)

Commented [notes1]: 1 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.
Heb 2:1 (NIV)

We are now moving into a much shorter series, First John. The Gospel of John is the life and instructions of Jesus. Ten years later, sometime in the last decade of the first century, John followed his story of the life of Jesus with this letter to the churches, probably the same churches addressed in the Book of Revelation. It is a series of admonitions on how to live the message of the Gospel of John. It's a description of what a Christian life should be like and why. More than likely, John is addressing specific problems that have been described to him by elders of those churches. Those problems were probably the same ones as those of the churches in the Book of Revelation, problems that the church has faced ever since. (Revelation 2-3) Man doesn't change, so his problems remain the same. (Jeremiah 17:9) They may take different forms, but the roots are the same, pride and the misuse of creation for temporal, illegitimate gratification. The manifestation of the problems included false teachers, compromising morality, rival religions, and the threat of persecution. (cf. ZIBBC, Vol 4, p. 178-179) We'll get more specific in the weeks to come.

Commented [notes2]: 9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?
Jer 17:9 (NIV)

If John was a young teenager when Jesus died, he would have lived into his 80s or 90s. We know from historical information that he lived into the beginning of the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan (A.D. 98-117). He was the elder of the churches in Asia, especially Ephesus. They would have looked to him, the final living apostle, for clarity on the teachings, meaning of Jesus' life, and practical application of that teaching.

John begins the letter like he began his gospel by going back to the beginning and identifying Jesus as the *logos* of life. (John 1:1-2) The other two letters of John begin with a more formal greeting, but this letter jumps right into his message. ¹ *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.*

Commented [notes3]: 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 He was with God in the beginning.
John 1:1-2 (NIV)

From the beginning... We tend to look at that which is new as a passing fad and the ancient things, having withstood the test of time, to be more substantial. Even Moses began by starting at the beginning. (Genesis 1:1) Jesus appealed to the fact that He was before Abraham. (John 8:58) Just because something is ancient, however, does not guarantee its validity. That said, if something is true, it has been true throughout time. A revelation of truth is a revelation of what has always been,

Commented [notes4]: 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
Gen 1:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 58 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"
John 8:58 (NIV)

for God is unchangeable. (Malachi 3:6) John says this story is from the very beginning. Nothing precedes it. Jesus is a revelation that goes back before all others, for He is the Creator. (John 1:3)

Commented [notes6]: 6 "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Mal 3:6 (NIV)

Notice in this first verse John refers to "we", which is to the apostles, the ones that lived with Jesus and wrote down His words and life's story. They *heard* the words of Jesus, and as good disciples of a rabbi, they would memorize their Rabbi's response to certain questions, or teachings about certain subjects.

Commented [notes7]: 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. John 1:3 (NIV)

They also *saw with their eyes* the way He lived. You can't campout with someone for three years and not know their character. If your neighbor camped out with you for three years, what would they say about you? Would they want to tell the world about your character, or would they just be glad it was over? Jesus' daily life made an impression on them. What they saw often amazed them, like the miraculous catches of fish, the water turned to wine, the multitudes fed, the paralyzed restored, the blind seeing, and even the dead raised to life. (Mark 6:51; Luke 4:36; 5:26) What they saw blew their minds again and again, but the biggest jaw dropper was when He appeared in their midst after the crucifixion. They saw that! How would that impact you, to have been a witness in that room? (John 20:19) You'd never be the same, and they weren't.

Commented [notes8]: 51 Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, Mark 6:51 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 36 All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!" Luke 4:36 (NIV)

It sounds like John is repeating himself when he adds to seeing with his eyes, that he *looked at* Him. The difference is that the second phrase is a prolonged version of the first. In other words, the disciples didn't just glance at these things; they studied them. They examined closely the miraculous events including the resurrected body of Jesus. This was no slight of hand. Jesus wasn't an illusionist, a hypnotist, or ventriloquist. He was the real thing. (Luke 24:39-40)

Commented [notes10]: 26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today." Luke 5:26 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" John 20:19 (NIV)

Their hands touched Him. This is important, because false teachings were beginning to arise that Jesus wasn't a real physical being. The teaching arose because of the idea that the physical was imperfect and even evil. Some were teaching that Jesus was an apparition. But the teaching from the apostles was that He is all man and all God. He was a physical man who went through life just as we do but without sin. (Hebrews 4:15) That was an important point in being the second Adam who restored what the first Adam had lost in the Garden. (1Corinthians 15:22) It was important to the atonement that as a sinless man, He could take our sins upon Himself. The denial of Jesus' humanity arose out of Greek philosophies that didn't understand the Hebrew background to the gospel. They wanted to combine the popularity of the Jesus' stories with Greek ideas. We call that merging of beliefs, syncretism. The danger of syncretism is that doctrine becomes corrupted or at least watered down.

Commented [notes12]: 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. Luke 24:39-40 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Heb 4:15 (NIV)

The New Age is a perfect example. You can ask a believer in New Age if they believe in Jesus and they will say they most definitely do. The same is true with Islam and Hinduism. Those belief systems just incorporated Jesus into their system of belief, but the inevitable outcome is a distortion of the facts. Ask if they believe He died for our sins. That's the real test, even within branches of the Christian church. Syncretism corrupts the amazing story of Jesus that is coherent, logical, and rich in

Commented [notes14]: 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 1 Cor 15:22 (NIV)

meaning and hope. Syncretism is usually inconsistent with history and the prophets. We have to ignore the teaching of the men that lived with, heard, saw, examined and touched Jesus to accept those beliefs that incorporate Jesus into their religions. Inconsistency and the lack of logic doesn't seem to bother some. It certainly should bother us if we are truth seekers!

Faith and observation are not antithetical. John is declaring that what he is relating about Jesus is experiential truth. It's not just an idea, or belief, but truth verified by the physical senses of the disciples. Sometimes we place such an emphasis on faith that we discount our own observations.

There are times when people claim to have heard from God and then what they declared does not happen in any way shape or form. I've seen it over and over again. But instead of learning from experience that the person is not hearing correctly, they just go on as if it had all come to pass. We must be honest with our physical experiences. Faith does not ignore reality; it transforms it! John is sharing reality, not some un-testable ideology. (Malachi 3:10; Psalm 34:8) He will be giving us experiential ways to validate whether or not we are in Christ.

(The last part of verse one, "we proclaim" is added from verse three for the comprehension of the English reader.)

² *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.* If you were with us two weeks ago, you recognize the word that John used in the last chapter of his gospel, "appear". We saw that the word meant to manifest the true nature and that Jesus' true character is loving service. Life exhibited His true nature. Here, John substitutes "life" and "the eternal life" for Jesus' name. We'll examine "life in Jesus" more in chapter two, but suffice to say for now that, to John, to have life is to be in Jesus both now and forever. John's gospel quoted Jesus as saying that He is resurrection and life. (John 11:25) Life is more than existence. Life is knowing the life giver. (John 17:3)

Life was, for all eternity past, with the Father. That genuine nature of Life was manifested, became a physical being, Jesus, the Christ. (John 1:14) John is writing about no less than Life. If you have any concern about life, eternal life, you will want to tune in to this study in First John, for this is John's topic.

John wants to give testimony (*martyreo*) to us, and to proclaim (*appangello*) to us the Word of Life, Jesus, that we might know Him and how He (Life) relates to all the problems we face in the world. To testify is the word from which we get our word martyr. You see, the declaration of Jesus' nature is so contrary to this world's system and attachments, that in telling of what they witnessed of Jesus' life, they would end up dying for that testimony. (John 15:20-21) This world's system and that of the kingdom of God are so contrary, that the world's system cannot even tolerate hearing the truth. (Matthew 24:9) But John is going to proclaim it any way. They can try to boil him in oil, exile him to a penal colony island, but they can't shut him

Commented [notes15]: 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. Mal 3:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 8 Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Psalms 34:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; John 11:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 20 Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. 21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. John 15:20-21 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 9 "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. Matt 24:9 (NIV)

up. He's experienced too much. He's come to know Jesus experientially and He is bursting to tell everyone the truth about Life.

³ *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.* Why does John insist on sharing what he experienced with Jesus? It's so that you can have fellowship (*koinonia*) with the body of Christ. We have come to use the term "fellowship" to mean any time we get together to enjoy one another's company. Let me give you a better idea of what it meant to John. *Authentic partnership with Jesus and fellow believers - mutual life and love of those who are one in spirit.* –John M^cCarthur

We can get together after the service for snacks on the patio and some people will enter into this fellowship that John is talking about, and others won't. If you just talk about the weather, politics, the latest football game, sorry, nothing wrong with those topics, but it falls far short of John's meaning of fellowship. On the other hand, some will share insights into God's word, discuss the sermon, relate the spiritual battles they had this week, the praises over victories in their life, and enter into that partnership with Jesus and fellow believers, sharing love with those who are of one spirit. (Acts 2:42)

I wish we were always aware of the opportunities to have fellowship and would take advantage of them. They come at different times and places, on the phone, at work, traveling, or just about anywhere. It's sharing with each other something of that Life we have found in Christ. Of course, if you are not experiencing that life you won't be able to experience fellowship either. If we are absorbed with the mundane passing world, we won't have much of the life of Christ to talk about. If we have fellowship with the Father and the Son, we will have fellowship with one another.

Lone Ranger Christian is an oxymoron. Sheep don't travel in flocks of one. John will address that more later on in the letter. The reason Christians leave fellowship is often blamed on the church for one reason or another, but it really all comes back to a personal lack of fellowship with the Father and the Son. If you are in fellowship with Them, you find forgiveness and can't wait to share your life in Christ with others who are experiencing the same.

One of the themes of the letter is how to tell if we are in Christ. This is the first clue. We have fellowship with one another. If we fellowship with Christ, we will fellowship with His body. (Romans 12:5) John is writing so we will have both. His warnings and admonitions are meant to keep us in Life, in fellowship.

When we have fellowship with the Father and the Son and with one another, there is a by-product that naturally emerges in the soul. ⁴ *We write this to make our joy complete.* The by-product of genuine fellowship is joy. The word "our" in some manuscripts is "your", to make your joy complete. Either is appropriate. John says in another letter that he has no greater joy than to know his children walk in truth. (2John 4) Jesus said He taught us so that our joy would be complete. (John 15:11) Both are certainly true. If you heed the admonitions in this letter, you will make

Commented [notes22]: 9 "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. Matt 24:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. Romans 12:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 4 It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. 2 John 1:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. John 15:11 (NIV)

John very happy, for it will bring glory to God. If you take heed to this letter, you will find joy in your soul, for you will have fellowship with the Father, the Son, and fellow believers. You will know the joy of eternal things that are so much greater than the fleeting joys of this world.

Stoic thinkers of John's day avoided the emotion of joy. They thought it frivolous and unproductive, but the Gospel has always been associated with joy. Joy is mentioned at the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:10), at the effectiveness of the ministry of the disciples (Luke 10:17), at the resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:41), and Jesus promised joy to His followers and prayed for their joy to be full (John 17:13). Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, second only to love. (Galatians 5:22) It is related to love. John loves his fellow believers, and so, to see them walk in the truth made him joyful.

Joy comes with the presence of Christ in our lives, for He is anointed with the oil of joy to a greater extent than any of us. (Hebrews 1:9) Think of the most joyful person you know. Jesus is more joyful! We share in His own joy. (John 15:11) It is a joy of knowing that we are part of something so meaningful as the salvation of man, of knowing we are loved by God, that we are forgiven, and that He is indwelling our lives and working eternal and meaningful things through us. It is knowing that we are in the process of being made more like Him and that work will one day be complete. (1John 3:2) We are no longer slaves of sin! It is knowing Jesus has prepared a place for us and we are His chosen bride for all eternity. It is knowing that righteousness and truth will prevail in the end. Goodness will have the last say. It is sometimes called joy unspeakable or indescribable. (1Peter 1:8) It is even experienced in the midst of suffering as when the disciples were persecuted for Jesus' name. (Acts 5:41)

The world knows nothing of this kind of joy. You never heard a group of unbelievers sing, "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of atheists." In fact, you rarely hear any other religion sing with joy remotely similar to our own. Imagine the Muslim singing, "When we all get to heaven, then we'll know our destiny! When we all see Allah, heaven or hell we will see." Or how about a Hindu singing, "I can only imagine, when that day comes, will I be coming back, as a hu-man?" We've got a song to sing because we have Jesus' joy. Amen? We know what is before us. We have a hope that is unshakable, an anchor for our soul.

There is only one thing that can give true joy and that is contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He satisfies my mind; He satisfies my emotions; He satisfies my every desire. He and His great salvation include the whole personality and nothing less, and in Him I am complete. Joy, in other words, is the response and the reaction of the soul to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Martin Lloyd-Jones (John 15:4,7,11; Psalm 16:11) Got joy? John is writing this letter so that his joy and yours will be complete.

Commented [notes26]: 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.
Luke 2:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."
Luke 10:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"
Luke 24:41 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.
John 17:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
Gal 5:22 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."
Heb 1:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.
John 15:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.
1 John 3:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes34]: 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ... [1]

Commented [notes35]: 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.
Acts 5:41 (NIV)

Commented [notes36]: John 15:4 (NIV)
4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Commented [notes37]: John 15:7 (NIV)
7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

Commented [notes38]: John 15:11 (NIV)
11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Commented [notes39]: Psalms 16:11 (NIV)
11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,
1 Peter 1:8 (NIV)