

1 John 1:1-4
Abide in Fellowship

I. Intro

Which living person would you like to know more?

Now, the right answer for most of us should probably be the person next to you.

And maybe for a moment you thought of a celebrity or a sports figure or a musician.

But maybe, some of you... your sitting in church thought... I wish I could know God more.

Have you ever considered that there could be a relationship with God that brings real and lasting and complete joy?

We are beginning a study on the book of 1 John.

And John is writing to Christians all over the world. Some actually believe that this may have been the final letter of the New Testament written.

And John had the reputation of being not just a close friend of Jesus, but perhaps His best friend... and John is writing to people of God reminding them of the basics of faith... and he begins with a very important invitation here in His letter.

So let me ask you a searching question? Do you know God? I mean really know Him. Know Him like you know your spouse, know Him like your mother or father or sister or brother, know Him like a co-worker or a friend.

Now come on, you're thinking... Brian... God is a distant force... you can't know Him with that level of intimacy.

Friends, John would argue otherwise. In fact, John is beginning his book declaring the truth that your relationship with God can be as real and as tangible as any person in this room.

You see... today we are going to discover... that not only can it be that real...but

The practice of communion with God will have the greatest impact of any person on your life.

Three thoughts we will process today...

There is a unique person.

There is a unique presence.

There is a unique practice.

II. A Unique Person

Think back to the question... 'who would you like to know more'...

So for me... I think I would like to know a guy named Patrick Lencioni.

(PICTURE OF PATRICK LENCIONI)

He's a organizational guy. He wrote a couple books that have really shaped my understanding of goal setting, of leading teams, and I would love to get to know him, pick His brain, just spend time with him.

Why? Why did you say the person you did? Why did I say that Patrick?

Perhaps it because of their wisdom, perhaps it is because of their beauty, perhaps it is because of their joy...

Whoever you said... it's because of the uniqueness of that person. Something that their presence would offer you, that an encounter with them would offer you. .

John here speaks of something very profound. He is saying we can have relationship with God.

1 John 1:3

Look at the verse again... He uses the word fellowship.

That word fellowship is very important. It's a word that means that there is a real relationship possible with God.

He is saying that you and I can have a lasting, active, purposeful, relationship with our creator.

What John is saying here is that it is not enough just to believe in God or even just to obey him. John is saying God has gone to infinite lengths to come near you, to have a personal relationship with so that you can know Him personally. God is not content to simply be a concept to be believed or even something to warm your heart. And the great God of the universe wants to be in fellowship you, so you can know His uniqueness.

What makes God unique? He is the most important person who exists, because He made all others. When you think back to that person you wanted to know more... probably none of us thought of someone less than us. I mean no one in here thought, I want to know Brian more. Why? Because I'm like a lot of you. No... we think of exceptional people. People beyond our skills, beyond our knowledge, beyond our competence... **Christianity promises you intimacy with the Infinite.**

And John is saying... you can have fellowship with the infinite!!
On the scale of beauty, He is beyond any. On the scale of excellence, He is beyond any.
On the scale of wisdom, He is beyond any.
On the scale of pleasure... He himself pleases fully and finally.
On the scale of interesting... He is beyond any. You could search God for an eternity and never be bored.

John is saying... the most unique person in the universe, you can know Him.
I would ask you, are you interested in knowing God?
Well, to help our intimacy be more of a reality, God did something none of us would expect...
He actually revealed Himself. You see He's not just a unique person, but He gave a unique presence.

III. A Unique Presence

John 1:1

This isn't founded on superstitious make believe. John had an historic, audible, visible, tangible experience of God. God Himself made a real appearance into our world. His presence was real!

John watched Jesus turn water into wine, heal the sick, raise people from the dead. He heard the cries of Jesus on the cross. He touched the risen Jesus. He wanted us to know, God has appeared. There is a unique presence.

There is no longer a guessing game when it comes to God.
God is not shrouded in mystery. He is not floating around in space. He actually can be known!

You can have a clear certain knowledge of your creator today!
But we have a problem...
Even though God's presence was made known in Jesus, our world is looking for God's presence in the most absurd and mystical ways. Listen to this article about something that happened this week...
(Picture or map with Hobbs New Mexico)

A Virgin Mary sculpture in a New Mexico Catholic church that has appeared to be weeping in the past is reportedly crying again. The Catholic Diocese of Las Cruces is investigating the Virgin Mary sculpture. Las Cruces Bishop Oscar Cantu said if the cause of the phenomenon is deemed supernatural by church investigators, church officials "must discern if it is from God or from the devil."
I heard about it this morning from my mother and my grandmother," said Billy Luna, of Kermit, Texas. "I was on my way to Ruidoso for the weekend and I wanted to stop and give thanks."
This wasn't Luna's first time to the Our Lady Parish, but it was the first time he has seen the statue appear to weep. "It looks real to me," Luna said. "I felt something in here (pointing toward his heart) when I saw her. I get chills just thinking about it." Some Catholics believe unexplained images of Our Lady of Guadalupe or the Virgin Mary statues appearing to cry are signs of a coming tragedy or a possible warning.

Look... before we go off judging these people... let me challenge you...
How do you go about looking for God's presence? I think we have a whack-a-mole mentality when it comes to God's presence. We feel like we have to do all of these things... we have to ask just to write, be moral, go to church, and maybe, just maybe, if we are lucky God will pop out and we will be able to see Him.
Are you like? But to take it a step further, are you even interested in the presence of God?

The creator of the universe made His presence known! Hear it again...

I John 1:1

You don't have to wonder if God is going to appear in a tear.

The life was manifest to John. John saw God. And John proclaims it to us. And today we can know God for real. His presence was here in Jesus. A unique presence.

And if we have the opportunity to know a unique person, who appeared in a unique presence, that leads us to the question, how can we know God then? Well... we have a unique practice.

IV. A Unique Practice

If God is not hidden and has made Himself known... there is not an option for us to say, 'God is vague, or unclear, or hard to find.' God is not hiding, the question is, are you?'

We are invited to come into a unique relationship with our creator. To actually know God. To practice communion with Him in a way that radically change and impact our lives.

One author put it this way: **The essence of knowing God, this experience, is when the mind filled with God's truth descends into your heart, captures the imagination and makes all kinds of connections into your life and that truth explodes inside of you and drenches your heart, mind, and will in that truth. -John Stott**

Let me see if I can put some handlebars to that...

So, Monday night everything got crazy... It's 10 and we are about to go to bed and I start looking for my wallet. Well, after 5 minutes we realize that I left it at Buffalo Wild Wings. So, I go up there to get it and the cards were there, but my cash was gone. Well, then I go home and two minutes after I get home Darby calls us. She's in college and was headed home to Chicago and her flight was diverted to Indianapolis and so we are all worried about getting her home. And so, for the next four hours we are processing that. Well, as I'm lying in bed, waiting for a text from her, I start to process and get nervous about a meeting that I had on Tuesday. So, all this is pounding... and I start praying. I just start saying to God... God I know you are a God of peace. That in the midst of chaos you are never surprised or nervous. None of this stuff surprised you tonight. And I just need to experience you as a peace. Can you help that truth explode in my heart? Now, I don't want to get overly mystical on you guys... But I will say this. I absolutely believe that God made Himself known to me in that moment. That His presence, that who He was, He made that known to me.

And that communion with God, was real and tangible just like John said it could be way back in the first century. And you are invited to that experience as well. You see there is a unique person, who appeared in a unique presence and offers you the unique practice of communion with Him.

Would you consider applying that practice? Would you consider entering into a real relationship with God? Two ideas to help you get started.

Maybe you want to join me this week in reading 1 John. You could read 1 chapter a day, there's five chapters, and look for how God is described in each chapter. And ask Him to help you get to know those things about Him. Ask Him to show you the reality of who He is in Jesus.

Or, on Sept. 30th we are going to offer a class at 9am to help you with some practical steps on how to spend time with God. It's going to be a great class to offer you some tools and helps to get started. Maybe start there?

Maybe today you are still asking the question why... I mean I get that God is unique, and I get that His presence was made known and I get that I can practice his presence... but why would I?

I'm struck by the extent God went to, to make Himself known. He came into our world and suffered the things that all of us have to suffer. And not just that, on the cross He became unknown. Jesus cried out, why have you forsaken me? Jesus went through being separated from the Father so that you and I could know Him. You see if I want to know Patrick Lenconi, I have to reach out to him. I have to setup the appointment. I have to ask Him to meet. But God, He came into our world to reach out to you. God went to infinite lengths to get near you, to get close to you, so that you could know Him. He made the appointment. He offered the invitation.

And the invitation is... come and know me!

The practice of communion with God will have the greatest impact of any person on your life.

SERIES INTRODUCTION

This is a pretty branch, isn't it?

It has nice leaves, it looks like it is flourishing.

But there's a problem, isn't there. It won't be long... And this branch is going to wither and die.

Jesus had something to say about this in John 15...

⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

What is a picture of your life with God? Are you abiding in Him? Do you feel the joy of the fruit He is producing in your life, or do you feel disconnected, do you feel dry, do you feel, withered? We are starting a new series today called Abide.... It is an invitation to return to the vine. To be the kind of branch that bears fruit.

I hope you will join us over these next weeks and we unpack and process what it means to Abide.

Maybe we could join John in His invitation in I John 2:28:

And now, little children, **abide** in him

INTRODUCTION OF CARD

In the past we have made books for you to walk through the series and take notes, but we want to introduce something new this fall. If you would get out your phones and go to your web browser, I want to show you something on thesummitstl.info.

Throughout this entire series we want to provide a new way for you to engage with the message and take notes. If you go to thesummitstl.info you will see some cards there. The first one is called Sermon Notes. If you click on that and scroll down, you will see the notes for today's sermon.

Now in each section there is a place where you can click – add note. So, if you hear something that you want to remember or process later you can add a note. Then save it. If you want to add more, you can click on it again and add more.

Then if you scroll down to the bottom you will see 'email me my notes'...

So, after the sermon is over you can click on that and get your notes emailed to you to process for later in the week or to have for community group... however you want.

If you are still a paper person, on the back of the bulletin is a place to take notes.

So, let's try this for a season.

We will remind you every week about the site and the sermon notes will go up on Saturday before every message.

If you have any problems or questions come, see us at the welcome center after the service.

So... with that being said... let me read our passage this morning from the book of I John.