



gracefellowship

Summer Shorts
June 7, 2020
1 John (Part 1)

New Series: Summer Shorts

We will be looking at some of the shorter books in the NT- specifically the epistles written by John. Sometimes these smaller books get overlooked because they are literally 1 chapter long! But in their brevity they have some powerful things to say. We will actually take 2 weeks to look at 1 John since it has 5 chapters in it. The goal isn't to cover every verse, but to pull out the main themes and see what John's writings have to say to us as we endeavor to follow Jesus.

:: 1 John 1:1-4

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.

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.

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.

4 We write this to make our joy complete.

:: 1 John 2:1-2

1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

- Pray

John is writing this letter as a way to combat some false doctrine, which had infiltrated the churches in Asia Minor. The letter is unaddressed, so it probably was meant to be passed around between several churches. We think this may have been written around 90 AD. The verses we read a few minutes ago tell us the purpose of John's writing. Before we get into the issues he was addressing let's take note of his desires for the churches as they read this letter and for us

today.

Purpose for John's Letter

1. The joy of Christ-followers may be complete through deep fellowship.

Their joy would only be complete as people walked into Christ-like fellowship with John and other Christians as well as deep, abiding fellowship with God. This is one of the hallmarks of Christian maturity—living in fellowship with God and one another. We have been and continue to be in a difficult season as COVID-19 has required us to be separated from one another and our weekly gatherings. While I am thankful that some are able to be back today, I understand that not all feel like the time has come to rejoin the gathering for worship. My simple encouragement to you would be to keep in mind that this is for a season as our world continues to fight against this virus. A time will come, and I hope you prepare in your heart for it, when we will all gather again.

- Two weeks ago when we had our outdoor worship service and the first time we had all had the opportunity to be together again one person told me after church, “I have actually enjoyed worshiping from home, but I didn’t realize until today how much I had missed people! Being back was really encouraging to me.”
- I’m not saying that to shame anyone who isn’t ready to make that jump back into public gatherings; I’m simply using it as an example of the fact we are created for relationship. We should fight for relationships. And we should prepare our hearts for the day we are all able to be together again.
- Until then, fight for fellowship in your neighborhood, through your Life Group and in your family.
- Fellowship with God is the primary pursuit we should be hungry for. This season of life has left a lot of us with extra time on our hands as some of our normal activities have been taken away. How are you spending time with God and living in fellowship with Him?
 - I have to be honest with you that right now a lot of my fellowship with God is spent confessing and confronting things that I’ve had going on in my life for a while but I’ve been too busy to deal with. Now I find some ugly truths about myself being exposed and fellowship with God has resulted in allowing Him to do some surgery in my life and show me where I’m unhealthy spiritually and emotionally.
 - When we are in fellowship with God we will see Him bring light into the dark places of our hearts. More on that in a few minutes.

Here’s the second reason John is writing this letter to the churches:

2. That Christ-followers might not sin.

John knows that sin, no matter how attractive, will not bring lasting happiness. Sin always tells us that it will satisfy, but it always leaves us unfulfilled.

:: 1 John 2:1-2

1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

It's unrealistic to think that we will never sin, but John wants us to have a fighting chance against the pull of temptation. Then when we do sin, John wants us to be reminded that we have an advocate standing in defense for us before His Father. Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and for the sins of the entire world- for as many as would accept His gift.

Those are the two primary purposes John wants to get across in this letter, but he has a reason that writing this letter is even necessary in the first place: John is confronting false doctrine that has crept into the churches.

The primary false teaching John is writing against is called Gnosticism. It was a teaching that basically said anything material in nature was evil. Only the spirit world was good.

The issues with this teaching is why John tells us his purpose for writing:

1. If everything material is evil, they claimed that God could not have created the material universe. They thought a lesser god created the universe and according to them the God of the OT was that lesser being. They tried to divide between the God of the OT and the NT.
2. If everything material is evil, they also believed that Jesus did not take a physical human form. They claimed that Jesus appeared to have a human body, but that you couldn't touch him- they even claimed when Jesus walked He didn't leave footprints! This means Jesus could not have suffered on the cross because he his body was not tangible.

This created several problems, as you can imagine. First, this group brought division to the church. They said there was a difference in those who were enlightened and had achieved, through special knowledge, the ability to be fully spirit and to have released their spirit from the bondage of matter.

Anyone who did not achieve this special knowledge was excluded by them and made to feel they were "less than." This was completely destructive to Christian fellowship.

Second, because they had achieved this level of spirituality those who practiced Gnosticism believed they were no longer capable of sin.

With these issues in mind John has several things to say to the church in the first

century- and I think we will find some helpful things God wants to say to us today as well.

John writes to defend the eternal and historical reality of Jesus as God.

There are two themes that will flow through the entire book:

- a. **God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all (1:5).**

- b. **God is love, and His love is demonstrated by sending His Son as our sacrifice for sin (4:7-10, 16).**

Earlier we read 1 John 1:1-4. In these verses John points out that his experience with Jesus is far different than the teachings of these “spiritually enlightened” false teachers.

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.

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.

3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us.

Jesus was...

- From the beginning: In other words the God of the OT and the NT is the same God. Jesus is eternally God.
- John had heard him and seen Him with his own eyes
- John had looked at him and his hands had touched Jesus.

When John said they had seen him and they had looked upon him he is using two different words. To say he had seen him literally just mean he witnessed Jesus' presence with his own eyes. To say that he had looked at him meant that John had taken time to gaze upon Jesus until he had grasped the significance of Jesus.

- Before Heather and I left Dallas to move to Arkansas I found out there was a museum of biblical art and on display was a painting by Ron Dicianni that was absolutely spectacular. It shows Jesus emerging from the tomb and on either side of him are people from the OT who were forerunners of Jesus. It is 40' feet wide and 12' tall.

We are going to put an image of the painting on the screen. It's not a great image, but I'm using it to show the scale of the mural.

- <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.breadforbeggars.com%2F2014%2F04%2Fthe-resurrection-a-mural-masterpiece-by-ron-dicianni%2F&psig=AOvVaw12dhQNbff9iDlepuwyOxa-&ust=1591385138376000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAIQjRxqFwoT>

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When we went I just sat in the room with that painting for the longest time. I'm not a huge art lover, but I wanted to drink that in and try to catch all the details the painting included. I just gazed on it until I felt like I had soaked it in.

John's personal experience with Jesus trumps the teaching of the Gnostics. He is able to say, I have seen and heard Jesus and I have looked at Him and even touched Him!

Then John discusses the idea that anyone could rise to a place of spirituality that they no longer sin.

:: 1 John 1:5-10

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

6 If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

John does not tell us we will become sinless when we follow Christ. In fact, he says anyone who believes that has been deceived. Instead, he tells us this is 1 John 2:12:

:: 1 John 2:12

12 I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

Our sins have been forgiven by Jesus! Now we are free to act in a manner worthy of being a Christian. Not perfect, but acting toward the world in the same way Jesus did.

Look at 1 John 2:3-11

:: 1 John 2:3-11

3 We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.

4 Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.

5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in

them. This is how we know we are in him:

6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

7 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard.

8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness.

10 Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble.

11 But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

What are the commands of Jesus?

- To love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength
- To love our neighbor as our self

When you come to know God He changes your life radically. God becomes the highest and greatest priority in your life. You start to view people differently- with a love that you once reserved only for yourself.

John writes about this in depth in chapter 3.

:: 1 John 3:11-24

11 For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

12 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

13 Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

15 Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

19 This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence:

20 If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence

before God

22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.

23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

24 The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

John tells us we know what love is because Jesus modeled the ultimate love by laying His life down for us. Then he says we ought to lay our lives down for our brothers and sisters.

- Primarily that means those in the family of God, but it's not limited to that.
- We need to be people who demonstrate the love of God to all people.

How?

18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

In regards to loving our Christian family, one way we can do that in our current circumstances is to show love to people when we come to church regardless of their preference on wearing masks.

- For those who are wearing masks, love and don't sit in judgment on those who are not.
- For those not wearing masks, love and don't sit in judgment on those who are.
- This seems like such a little thing, but it's one of the more divisive conversations as churches are opening back up.
- If you're attending church in person, don't look down on those who aren't.
- If you are not attending church in person right now, don't look down on those who are.
- Everyone is making difficult decisions. It's not our job to pass judgment on one another, it's our joy to love one another through our differences.

For those who may be outside the family of God, we have seen a lot of awful stuff this week in our country. The death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer is tragic. African Americans are hurting and responding out of their hurt, seeking change to racial tensions that have divided our nation for too long. How do we help bring about change and usher in healing?

Look at verse 18 one more time:

18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

It's just fine to post things on social media and voice your opinion. But don't think that is bringing change real change. We need to stop being social media warriors and find ways to go put our arms around people who are hurting. Go make

friends with someone who is a different race than you. Go stand and pray with our community. Show appreciation for law enforcement officials that are doing a good job serving and protecting all our citizens. Show understanding for African Americans who live in fear that you don't understand. Teach your kids to embrace all people, regardless of the color of their skin. Love with actions and in truth. Teach the truth that God has created us in His image, in a beautiful array of skin colors, but equal in value and worth.

In this way, through a people who love Jesus and love others as we love ourselves, let us pray that we change our world and daily bring God's Kingdom to earth through our loving actions. I can't change the world. But I can control the way I demonstrate God's love and usher His Kingdom values into the space around me every day.

:: 1 John 3:7-8

7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

8 The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

The work of the devil is always surrounded by darkness. Jesus has come to shine His light into the world and destroy the work of the devil. We'll talk more about that next week. I hope you'll join us!

- Pray
- Thank those watching from home and invite people to respond by text or email.
- Dismiss the online stream // Dismiss those in attendance to the parking lot

Discussion Questions

Ice Breaker: What's the worst trick or practical joke someone has ever pulled on you // or that you have pulled on someone else?

Read 1 John 1-2.

1. How does John describe his relationship with Jesus?
2. Why is it important that we see Jesus as eternally God who stepped into

human existence?

3. John writes to encourage fellowship among believers and between believers and God. Why does God put such a high priority on relationships?
4. 1 John 3:18 says, "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."
Where have you seen doing good make an impact in the world around you and bring relief from evil?
5. What do you need to do as a next step in obedience to the Holy Spirit based on this text and what we have talked about?