

We are Family

1 John 1: 1-4

We are starting a new series today. One of my favorite books of the Bible is the book of 1 John because it is a book of encouragement, a book of assurance. When Satan is attacking and the world seems to be caving in around us, when we feel like we are failures, the Apostle John comes along and assures us that we are going to be okay. John wrote this letter, it seems, to not one specific body of believers but several. Christianity had spread in the first century and many churches had been planted. However, due to this growth, there also arose many false teachers and churches were most likely being pulled from within. In comes John with his letter of encouragement and in a nutshell, simply put, says, “Focus on the basics” and “live secure”. I’ve titled this series, “Secure Living”. Wouldn’t we all like to have all our ducks in a row, the perfect job, 2.2 kids with college educations and great paying jobs, our retirement pension fund in place, automatic payments set up for all of our bills, a beautiful home on the beach, vacations planned out and paid for, ready for Heaven, etc. But many of us struggle with day to day living. Emotional struggles, marital issues, financial issues, career dilemmas, problems with our children and grandchildren and so forth.

Well John comes along and writes this letter to believers being pulled from all different angles – more than likely because they too are struggling and false teachers have risen to tell them all sorts of goofy things. Ever wonder why anyone would follow a Jim Jones or a David Koresh? Desperate people do desperate things.

But John is a mender, a fixer, an encourager. If you look at what John was doing when Jesus called him to follow HIM, you will find that John was mending his fishing nets.

According to the great author Watchman Nee, it is only natural that John’s writing ministry began after the Church had been in existence for several decades and he uses his natural abilities and gifts to mend things at a time when false teachings had begun to creep in. According to Ray Stedman, “there was need of a voice to call people back to the original foundations and that is the ministry of the Apostle John. He calls men back to truth. When we begin to drift, when some false concept creeps into our thinking or into our actions, it is John who is ordained of the Lord to call us back, to mend the nets and to set things straight.”

If you read through this Book in entirety, you will notice that John gives 4 different reasons for writing it:

1. 1 John 1:4 - ‘...we write this to make our joy complete’ – to bring healing and unity to the full body so that we can fellowship together.
2. 1 John 2:1 – ‘...I write this to you so that you will not sin’ – exhorting us to live Godly lives.
3. 1 John 2:26 – ‘...I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray’ – I believe as a warning as we will look at in the weeks to come.
4. 1 John 5:13 – ‘...I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life’ – to assure us, encourage us.

This is an incredible book and we will be breaking it down further each Thursday night so please join us if you are in town.

But today, let’s get started. Let’s look at the first reason why John wrote this letter as we look at the first 4 verses - the prologue or introduction - and set the foundation which will set our course for the next several weeks and months.

I believe there are three central points that John makes in these 4 verses:

1. Jesus gives us a relationship with God.
2. This relationship gives us fellowship with other believers.
3. This fellowship gives us joy.

Let's break these down but I want us to look at them in reverse order – as I think John inferred in his writing. Let me explain as we look at these three truths.

I. Fellowship with one another brings JOY.

- a. As I mentioned earlier, one of the four times that John mentions a reason for writing this letter is found in verse 4, “that we write these things to make our joy complete”.
 - i. I believe that John is saying that if in order for him to be happy, he knows that he needs fellowship. We are humans created to be social and to have relationships. What happens to people when they are deprived of human contact? Many lose their minds because we hunger for human contact.
 - ii. John 10:10 - God wants us to be happy – He wants us to have life, abundantly!!
 - iii. As we look at verse 3, we see that John says that he proclaims “what he has seen and heard” so that others can have fellowship with him.
 - iv. What is fellowship? If you are into boating, you might say that it is two people on the same ship. In fact, there is a sense in which that is true. They do have something in common -- the same ship. The word does in fact mean having something in common. If you have nothing in common, you have no fellowship. We all have things in common. Though Darwin and his followers might not agree, I dare say that we all are humans – that is our common bond. Most of us in this room have American citizenship in common. We have many things in common.
 - v. However, here John is talking about that unique fellowship which only belongs to those who share life in Jesus Christ together. We share the life of the Lord Jesus, and therefore we have fellowship with one another. This is the real thing, the real deal! This ‘family’ fellowship – belonging to the same family brings us real joy – real contentment. It is what we were created for – fellowship with God and with one another. Remember when God said, “it is not good for man to be alone” – we need each other!

II. Our relationship with God gives us fellowship with other believers.

- a. Notice the second part of verse 3, “And our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ”. The family that I mentioned – the common ground – is God. This is what defines us as Christians – it's what gives us our status. Without it we do not belong to this fellowship. Without it we are lost and wounded without a home. We are merely wandering aimlessly without a purpose.

- b. Ephesians 1:5 – we have been adopted as HIS sons.
 - i. He chose us – he came to the Orphanage (or Animal Shelter perhaps) and picked us out.
- c. Romans 8:15-17
 - i. We have the Spirit of Sonship and that Spirit testifies that we are Children (plural) together. We belong to the same Father – we are family and we are Heirs! Just like the old song, “We are family – I got all my sisters with me (or like I like to say, ...all my brothers, sisters and me”)

III. Jesus gives us this relationship with God.

- a. How do we get this relationship with God and belong to the Family? The first 3 verses here are a logical deductive summation that Jesus gives us the relationship with God.
 - i. Who is the Word of Life?
 - 1. John merely reminds these believers that it is Jesus, the one whom he saw and touched. He is reminding them what Jesus did – the whole gospel story.
- b. To me John is simply reminding these believers that God wanted a relationship with them, with us. Think about this – All powerful God allows His Son to die – not only allows it, but ordains it. Can you imagine how much HE loves you? He is pursuing you. When Adam and Eve sinned – why didn’t God just start over? Ever take a mulligan in Golf – why didn’t God just take a mulligan? Have you looked in the mirror lately – surely God could do better than me!!
- c. John 3:16 – He ‘so’ loved the world!!!!
- d. Remember when I said that John comes along and tells us to ‘get back to the basics’ – I think this is ‘ground zero’ – the starting point, “God Loves You”. No matter what else is going on in your world – God Loves You! So much that He sacrificed HIS own son.
- e. Romans 5:8 – Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. Jesus didn’t say, repent, become perfect and renounce your old ways and then I’ll die for you. Rather, it is “I love you so much that I’m willing to die for you, to pay for your sins so that you will repent and renounce your old ways”.
- f. Romans 6:23 – this is a Free Gift – no strings attached. You simply have to accept the gift! Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus – believe that He is the Messiah, the deliverer – the only one. Call out and you will be part of the family.

Friends, let’s get back to the basics – God loves you and wants you to be part of his ‘forever family’. Don’t delay – don’t make excuses. Tomorrow may not come. And for those of us who have already been adopted into this family. Let your joy be complete – enjoy the family. Encourage one another, love one another – let others encourage you. Don’t miss out. We need you and you need us!