



Sermon Title: Proclaiming the Word of Life (1 John 1:1-4) – Part 2.

Note to Group Leaders:

Pastor Ashwin referred to the following articles. The writers of this week's study suggest you ensure that your participants have opportunity to read them.

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2016/september/evangelicals-favorite-heresies-state-of-theology-ligonier.html>

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/october/what-do-christians-believe-ligonier-state-theology-heresy.html>

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. Tell of a situation when you have had to be a 'witness.' What was that like for you?
2. How have some of your preconceived notions (eg. other cultures; life issues) changed over time?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Explore information about the Greek Gnostic philosophy. How do you see it living out in our current society? <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism>
2. Why might have John used the word 'proclaim' (3x) in these verses? How did Pastor Ashwin define the word? What was John proclaiming?
3. According to John, (John 1:1,2 and 1 John 1:1-4) who is Jesus? Why is it important that John said 'we have seen with our eyes' and 'which we have looked at' in reference to Jesus? (v.1) Against what aspect of the Gnostic philosophy was he teaching?
4. 'If we don't have the right understanding of the person of Jesus, we have a serious problem. The identity of Jesus is the very core of our evangelical faith; it distinguishes us from the rest of the worldviews.' (Pastor Ashwin) What is the 'serious problem'? **What is 'evangelical faith'? (Note information in next column). Name some 'worldviews.'
5. Read Jesus' words in John 16:7. What did He mean? How is it possible to have a vibrant experience with Jesus today through His Spirit and participate in the abundant life He offers us?
6. What is the two-fold fellowship to which we are invited? (v.3) How is 'fellowship' different from 'socializing'? How does Peter's use of the word 'participate' (2 Peter 1:4) expand the understanding of 'Koinonia'?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. 'Our Fellowship is the most important thing God wants from us – not our money, not our talents, not what we can give Him- He wants you.' (Pastor Ashwin) Do you agree with his statement? What difference will it make in the way you use your money, your time and your talents this week?
2. What opportunities do you have this week to share your 'proclamation' about Jesus? What opportunities will you take to feel that your 'joy is complete'?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

THE WORD (NIV)

John 1:1,2

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning.

2 Peter 1:4

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

1 John 1:10

We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning,^[a] whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. ²This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. ³We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.

'Christian, What do You Believe? Probably a Heresy about Jesus, says survey,' (Christianity Today, October 2018.)

****Evangelicals were defined as people who strongly agreed with the following four statements:**

- The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe.
- It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior.
- Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin.
- Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation.

This week's writers:

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Reminder: Abdu Murray events:

<https://www.cschurch.ca/weekly-bulletin/>



About 50 years after Jesus' resurrection, false teachers influenced by Greek Gnostic philosophy began infiltrating the early Church. The word Gnosticism at its root basically means 'knowledge;' the knowledge that the Gnostics taught was mystical and secretive. They taught that the spiritual world was good while the material world was evil. They also questioned Jesus' incarnation and believed that He has a spiritual form but did not become a human being. The false Gnostic teaching caused great confusion on Jesus' identity among the early Church.

The book (letter) of 1 John was written to counter the false teaching. John also uses the word 'know' quite often, but he showed how his knowledge was not based on mystical revelation, but rather on the historical person and work of Jesus Christ. In 1 John 1:1, the use of the perfect tense "have heard", "have seen", "have looked at" and "our hands have touched Jesus" attests to the impactful experience John and the other disciples had interacting with Christ closely for over three years. The word "looked at" is not a fleeting glance but rather fixing one's gaze — as in marveling at something. Their actual experience with Christ enabled them to effectively advance God's mission and take the Message across the world.

Pastor Ashwin referenced an article in *Christianity Today* which highlights that in our 21st Century, people still wrestle with the identity of Jesus. Christians today have no foundation on basic biblical truths; they have an anaemic faith. If we don't have the right understanding of the person of Jesus, we have a serious problem. The identity of Jesus is the very core of our evangelical faith; it distinguishes us from the rest of the worldviews. There can be no compromise when it comes to the identity of Christ: He is divine; He is eternally God, with no beginning or end; He is central to our salvation. And, at a particular point in history, the Word took on flesh and He appeared as a man. He is called the 'Word of God' because He reveals God to us.

But how can we experience Christ today? Jesus' ascension does not mean a termination of His presence. He is with us through the Spirit (John 16:7) which allows us to "taste," "see" and experience Him. Like the Apostles, our personal experience with Christ will allow us to testify (proclaim used three times in the prologue, 1 John 1:1-4.) and affirm the truth about Him. We testify out of our personal experience; we affirm the truth about Jesus because we know Him and our lives are no longer the same because of Him. Our world desperately needs such authentic witnesses!

The author John then uses the deep word 'fellowship' inviting us to take part in the two-fold "fellowship" (v3) — fellowship with the Father and the Son, and fellowship with God's people. The Greek word for "fellowship" is *koinonia* which means participating in a common venture. We have true fellowship when we worship corporately, take part in small groups, and advance God's kingdom together by proclaiming who Christ is. In contrast to the Gnostic teaching which is mystical and secretive, John boldly and publicly shared the identity of Christ. We who have experienced Christ should likewise be His witness and invite others to join the two-fold fellowship.

Now some may say, "Evangelism is a spiritual gift which I do not have." However, this should not be an excuse of failing to proclaim our faith. If our passion for evangelism is low, Pastor Ashwin encourages us to examine ourselves by asking the following two questions:

1. Is Jesus a living person you constantly interact with or is He just a distant figure from the past?
2. Are you part of a vibrant community to encourage you in your spiritual journey?

May our proclamation of who Jesus is be a natural overflow of our faith. May it be a spiritual discipline. The Apostle John said, "We write this to make our joy complete (v4)." May we also experience the fullness of joy that comes when we confidently declare who Jesus is, invite others to share in our fellowship, and see them find joy as they get to personally know Him. As Pastor Ashwin concluded, let us "strive with everything we have to introduce others to our worshipping community, so they too can experience the joy of salvation."