

Fellowship: life with God

1 John 1:1-4

MPS The essence of the Christian life is one of fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

OBJ Every person can understand life with God by five characteristics that distinguish fellowship.

INTRO What would you say is the *essence* of Christianity?

READ 1 John 1:1-4

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. **1 John 1:1-4***

Today's sermon will be only one sentence long. Now it is a long sentence, and complex, but only one sentence long. That's what 1 John 1:1-4 is, one sentence. But in this sentence the whole of the Christian life with God is captured. And we can even simplify it further to one word, fellowship. **In his opening sentence, the Apostle John outlines his whole letter as he introduces life with God as one of fellowship.**

First John was written by the Apostle John. Now an aged man who has walked with Jesus since a young teen, history records that he lived out the last decades of his life in Ephesus, leaving Jerusalem when it was overthrown in A.D. 70. John is known for his unique writing style. And his letters are no exception. **Here is the beauty of John's first sentence that defines his culminating concept of life with God; he traces the revelation of God in Jesus Christ to those who trust in Him, and from them to invite the whole world into fellowship with God.**

John begins with Jesus. He opens his letter with similar words to his gospel, in reference to the One who "*was from the beginning*". This phrase references the eternal nature of Jesus, of which he is speaking and at the end of the verse refers to as "*the word of life*". He then walks through the reality of all that God's revelation in Jesus Christ produces. **God is made manifest in Jesus Christ, and in Him is life with God made manifest also.**

Most scholars believe John is writing to confront one of the greatest philosophical deceptions of the late First Century known as Gnosticism. Gnosticism held two main aspects, an exalted value on one's experience in forms of higher knowledge, required for salvation, and a simultaneous rejection of the physical or material world. We don't have a direct correlation with Gnosticism today. But we have countless iterations of similar philosophies that purport to elevate one's being with some special knowledge or sense of mystical experience, both of which deny much, if any, connection between what is spiritual and physical. One of the most prevalent forms in our culture is to hear people decry, "I'm spiritual, but not religious." It is a common deception throughout the ages to try and separate the spiritual and the physical. **John declares that Jesus was the supreme, eternal spiritual being, *the word of life from the beginning*, who came as the preeminent physical being, *made manifest*.**

The essence of the Christian life is one of fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

OBJ Five characteristics that distinguish FELLOWSHIP as life with God.

1. Jesus shows us God. .1-2a

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes,



which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—²the life was made manifest, John uses a couple of familiar phrases from his gospel to refer to Jesus. The first is a phrase that reminds us of His eternal nature, “*That which was from the beginning*”, and then concludes with “*the word of life*”. This phrase states that Jesus is eternal and that He is God, as in the opening of his gospel, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” That which is eternal became a physical being. He says, “*the life was made manifest*” (*phaneroo*), which means that this life is revealed, publicly made known. But his description of how Jesus, the word of life, was made manifest is even greater. He states that Jesus’ revealing was audible, “*which we have heard*”; it was visible, “*which we have seen with our eyes,*”; and it was tangible; “*we looked upon and have touched with our hands,*”. [John describes a full sensory experience in Jesus’ revealing to describe how we come to know God in Him.](#)

ILLUS I don’t know how you think about knowing someone, but I can’t think of any more comprehensive description. When I remember my loved ones who have passed, the one aspect I remember most is hearing their voice in my mind. A voice is as unique and distinctive as a fingerprint. But hearing alone can make one think their simply losing their mind. When we think of believing, few things are more compelling than seeing; as the saying goes, ‘seeing is believing’. It is hard to deny what you have seen with your own eyes, which is the first qualification of a testimony. But if you really want to know something is real and understand, there is no substitute for touching. Praise God for ‘doubting Thomas’ who wanted to touch his hands. [How many of us scoff at Thomas’ doubt, while we envy his opportunity to touch the nail-scarred hand of our Savior Jesus Christ.](#)

John declares the manifested reality of God because he heard, saw, and touched Jesus. There is none other who claims to be god that has ever been known in this way. And with all this, we know Jesus was glad to welcome us. [Jesus is God who came as man, who was heard, seen, and touched, to show us God.](#)

TRANS But look at how John connects Jesus’ coming as the word of life to our salvation.

2. [Jesus sources a salvation that is eternal.](#) .2

²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—

The second phrase John uses to refer to Jesus, “*the word of life*”, is not merely a description of the word but rather tells us that it is the word that sources life. Jesus is the source of life that one receives from God; He causes and sustains it. But the Christians in the First Century were faced with an understanding of salvation that can be all too common today, in thinking that it refers mostly, or only, to what will happen when we pass from this life. However, the way John confronts think wrong idea of salvation from God is to describe it in the same was as He does how we know Jesus. [Salvation is real here and now, and forevermore, because it is from the One who is eternal, who came to the here and now to bring life to us.](#)

Life with God is deeply spiritual, but it is also radically practical and physical. Salvation from God in Jesus Christ is the same as the very nature of the One who sources it. Life with God is not some out-of-body experience that transcends the reality of this physical world. When we believe to receive his free gift of eternal life, the life we have is as the life He IS. John describes the life that Jesus IS as the life that is manifested in every person who believes. Life from God through Jesus Christ is radically real in the physical realm, just as Jesus was; it is audible, visible, and tangible. This is why the New Testament teaches that the gospel empowers a life in obedience to Jesus, to hear the testimony of faith, to make visible a life of following Jesus, and to have real encounters from God. [Life with God begins here and now in this world, until it is perfected and completed at the passing of this world into the realm of eternity.](#)

TRANS And this third characteristic of Fellowship is likely the greatest manifestation of our salvation in this world.

3. [Jesus builds a community of saints to strengthen each one.](#) .3

³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

This third characteristic introduces a new word that culminates all that John is teaching, in regard to relationship with God, fellowship. *Koinonia*, the Greek word for fellowship, is used twice in verse three. One very common but wrong idea about salvation today is the “exclusively individual” nature with which we speak of and think about it. Salvation in Jesus Christ



brings one into a fellowship with other believers. This verse obliterates our “individualized” idea of what it means to be a Christian. The simple understanding is the “mutual sharing of life”. And while we typically use this word to describe the relationships among Christians in the church, this word describes the essence of life with God by relationship with Jesus Christ, as well as relationship with other Christ-followers. Consider what this means, Christian. The life we have with God is manifested through community with other Christians. *“Life together”, as we commonly speak of fellowship at LifePoint, is descriptive of our relationship with one another BECAUSE it defines our life with God in Jesus Christ.*

APPL Words matter among the body because they determine how our voice *makes audible* Jesus’ manifestation among us. Is there any wonder why the Scriptures exhort Christians to speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs!(Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) There is no substitute for a brother or sister in Christ who encourages you, in accordance with the Scriptures.(1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11) But there is no word more important or potent among God’s people than *“speaking the truth in love”* so that we can all grow up into the Lord Jesus Christ. Participation matters among the body, because our presence *makes visible* Jesus’ manifestation among us. Greeting one another matters among the body, because our touch of a high five, a fist bump, a firm handshake, or a hug *makes tangible* Jesus’ manifestation among us. Friend, listen to what John is saying. *Fellowship, life together shared with God and His people, is ANYTHING BUT only “knowledge” in nature. Jesus is real, powerful, personal, and present!*

TRANS And by the words with which we build up one another, we also share with others.

4. Jesus is the story we tell to invite others into fellowship with God. .3

³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

The Savior who was heard, seen, and touched, is now seen, and testified, to be heard by others, and proclaimed, so they too can be touched by His eternal power! When you became a follower of Jesus Christ, the purpose of your whole life is for the glory of His Name.(2 Corinthians 5:11,14) Just as Jesus came to show us God, and bring us into a relationship with Him, so our life with God holds the same purpose. Christ-followers live to tell others about what Jesus has done for them, our testimony, and tell of His love for them, what we proclaim. *We become the manifestation of Jesus into the world to those who do not know Him, the voice, presence, and the person, who invites others into this life with God that we know.*

Christian, is your whole life telling the story of how others can have fellowship with God?

5. Jesus strengthens a joy from God all the way to completion. .4

⁴And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

Isn’t it amazing to think that what God is doing today is not only for today but is leading to eternity! Every day, and every moment with God, matters for eternity. John will make this point numerous times in his letter because he wants us to remember it constantly in our life on earth. He is not making a claim that joy is perfected in this life, but that life with God is the only way to ultimately receive perfected joy. But be careful not to think that the joy we do receive from Jesus in this life is in any way sub-par to anything this world offers. The joy Jesus gives now is supreme in every way to every pleasure and happiness this world offers. *What John is stating is this; that the more you live in fellowship with God, with His people serving His purposes in this world, the more joy abounds in this life.*

When we share life together with Christ at the center, we are sharing life with God!

The essence of the Christian life is one of fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

Do you know this fellowship, life with God through Jesus Christ?

