

And so I do believe that over the next several weeks that this book will be a great encouragement to you in your walk with Jesus Christ. So let's just kind of introduce the book today.

[4 : 11] 1 John 1, 1 John 1, and beginning at verse 1. It says, This is God's word.

Would you pray with me and for me as we ask God to teach us today? Let's pray. God, thank you for the opportunity to be in your word today. Thank you for this new series as we go through the book of 1 John.

Pray that you would strengthen our confidence in the truth of your word. Pray that you would just help us live a life that is assured of the things of God and that we are confident in Christ.

And we ask this in his name. Amen. Well, every time that he walked past one of those buildings, he was always tempted to go in.

And in fact, the temptation that he had was really more of a curiosity than anything. And then one day he was on a business trip to New Orleans, Louisiana, down kind of around the Bourbon Street area.

[5 : 54] And he walked past one of those stores. This time, he went in. When he went in, he was a little nervous.

He sat down and very quickly a lady came out from behind a curtain. And over the next several minutes, she turned over several different cards.

And she read the lines that were on his hands. She asked him a series of questions about his background and family history and various other things.

And then all of a sudden, she stopped and she looked at him and she said, quote, something very significant is going to happen in your future.

Skeptical of her, but to be honest, a little intrigued. He asked her to continue on. And what she then revealed to him, according to this man's report in the Chicago Tribune, she revealed to him that that man was going to die a painful death just after he turned age 59.

[7 : 24] You know, when he walked out of that store that day, he said he felt kind of conflicted. On the one hand, he didn't believe she had psychic powers at all.

He didn't believe that lady had any knowledge or authority or ability to predict his future. In fact, he said after having gone through it, he felt like it was more of a gimmick than he did when he went in. But he said, I felt conflicted because on the other hand, when I left that store that day, I could not get out of my mind that lingering question.

What if it's true? What if it's true? Faith family, have you ever been haunted by the uncertainty of what if?

Have you ever gone through a situation where you tried to hold on to something you knew was true, but that lingering question of what if?

[8 : 37] What if? Kept lingering in your mind. I mean, you were certain that you were in love, but what if?

She says no. You knew that he was one of the best doctors in his field, but what if? The surgery didn't work out.

You knew that on paper you were the better team, but what if? We lose. You know, the uncertainty that comes with the question, what if, is a very common part of life.

And we experience it even right now. There are some of you wondering, what if the economy doesn't recover? What if he wins?

Or what if he wins? What if the pandemic gets worse? This is such a common experience for people to have that lingering uncertainty of what if.

[9 : 48] And if we are not careful, faith family, that kind of uncertainty will creep into our spiritual lives. Even on things we believe.

What if? I'm not a Christian. What if? God doesn't love me. What if the Bible is not true?

What if there is no resurrection? What if? That is exactly what is taking place in the lives of these believers to whom John writes this first epistle.

They are haunted by the question of what if. John is writing this late in life.

He's likely somewhere in his 90s, the last living apostle. He's already written the gospel that is his gospel, the gospel of John.

[10 : 58] It's very widespread by this point. In fact, it's been around long enough that people have taken the gospel and they've started to twist it. They've started to kind of pervert it.

And there's various different groups that are threatening the truth of Christianity. One group in particular was known as the Gnostics.

Many of you watching this will have heard of Gnosticism. And Gnosticism was not a kind of a systematic teaching. It was kind of a mixture of a lot of different ideas, kind of a hodgepodge, if you will.

In fact, many of the Gnostics during the Apostle John's day kind of mixed Greek philosophy with Christianity. And it was kind of this blending.

And for instance, it would go back to its origins, even back into Greek philosophy, that believed that Zeus, a god, had a son called Dionysius.

[12 : 04] And Dionysius was divine. He was the son of a god. And he was killed by a group called the Titans.

The Titans were the offspring of heaven and earth. Not to be confused by the football team coached by Denzel Washington. But after killing Dionysius, the Titans ate him.

They ate him. Meaning that they kind of became a mixture of physical and divine. Well, clearly, this upset Zeus.

And it upset Zeus so much that he destroyed the Titans with a thunderbolt. Now listen, the remains, the leftovers of the Titans when they were destroyed by Zeus, is what made up the human race, according to Greek philosophy and Greek mythology.

And so what you had, and this is important, stay with me, what you had among the human race now was part Titan and part Dionysius.

[13 : 21] Because the Titans had eaten Dionysius. What that meant was that human beings were made up of two substances. They were flesh, the Titan part, and they were spirit or divine, the Dionysius part.

They were flesh, which was bad. And they were divine or spirit, which was good. Now, someone who made this Greek philosophical teaching extremely popular in the 5th century BC was a man by the name of Plato.

Many of you, I'm sure, have studied Plato or you remember him from history class. Plato taught that basically the flesh, the physical being, was evil.

And the real person was the spirit inside. Salvation, if you would call it that for Plato, was the release of the spirit from the physical body.

So material things, physical things were bad. Spiritual things, the divine part of you was good. And it's interesting that Aristotle actually broke with Plato on this point.

[14 : 46] But here's the idea. Here's why this is important. It's because this is what Gnosticism believed. The Gnostics believed in this dichotomy of the flesh, bad, and the spirit, good.

Okay? And by the way, just a little side note, and I don't have a ton of time here. This view is still commonly held today. We don't often recognize it as this. And by the way, I'm not picking on these issues.

I'm just breaking down the worldview that's behind them. For instance, the argument for gay marriage is, it doesn't matter what my biology is, male, female.

What matters is, how do I feel inside? How does the person inside me feel? That's who I really am. That's Gnosticism. The argument for transgender is, it doesn't matter my biology, my physical, my flesh. What matters is how I feel inside.

[15 : 53] And so, I might be born biologically male, but if I feel female, if the person inside me feels female, then that's what I am.

It doesn't matter the flesh. What matters is what's inside you. That is Gnosticism. That is Plato revisited. And you also see it even in Christian funerals.

I mean, how many funerals I've been to where I've listened to the pastor say, oh, don't worry about Aunt Betty here. You know, this is just her shell.

This is just her body. It doesn't matter at all. What matters is that her spirit, that's the real her, that is now in heaven with Jesus.

That is not Christian teaching. That is Plato all over again. That is Gnosticism revisited.

[16 : 52] Now, why did I give you all that background? Why did I give you all that context? Here's why. And it's very important. Again, the Gnostic teaching that is infiltrating the believers, it's a big problem by the second and third century in the Christian movement.

But John is kind of dealing with the first wave. Is this Gnosticism is beginning to grow. It's beginning to infiltrate the church. And it's causing a lot of Christians to say, what if it's true?

What if it's true? Which would raise many, many questions with Christianity. For instance, if you're saying that the body, the flesh is bad, then how do you have the incarnation?

How do you have the infleshing of God? That God became a man. That is central Christian teaching. How do you have a bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ?

That is central to the teaching of Christianity. And that is why the Apostle John is going to say things like this throughout the letter.

[18 : 08] Let me give you a few examples. Notice first of all here, 1 John 1, verse 1. That which was from the beginning, talking about Jesus here, we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon, and have touched with our hands.

He was physical, flesh, and blood. He'll write later on in chapter 2, verse 22. Who is the liar? But he who denies Jesus, the man, is the Christ.

That the man is Christ. That Jesus is the God-man. John says this is the Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

He will write later on in this letter, chapter 4, verse 2. Chapter 4, verse 2. By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the Spirit of Antichrist, which you have heard was coming and is now in the world already.

[19 : 29] In other words, the Apostle John is saying, when it comes to the person of Jesus Christ, there is no room for what if.

There is no room for what if. And as you can imagine, this teaching of Gnosticism, as it continued to impact and influence people, created a split.

It created arguments. It created divisions among these believers. And so John will also address this kind of a theme. Chapter 4, verse 8.

Chapter 4, verse 8. He's going to say, Beloved, let us love one another. For love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love. Listen, we need to hold to the essence of the Christian faith.

[20 : 30] And we need to love one another in doing so. And again, as the Gnosticism, Gnostic teaching began to spread, there would be some Christians that would doubt.

What if it's true? What if it's true? Questions would arise in their faith. Their faith at times would be weakened. And so John is going to write things like this.

Look at chapter 5, verse 13. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

And this is the confidence that we have toward Him. That if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us and whatever we ask, we know that we have the request that we have asked of Him.

And now look at verse 20. Chapter 5, verse 20. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true.

[21 : 50] Faith family, look right here. All of this is to say, this is John's point. This is what he's driving home. This is what he's getting after. This is what he's going after.

It's this. Christians are not to live a life of what if. We're to live a life of we know.

Christians are not to live a life of what if when it comes to the Christian faith. We're to live a life of we know. We are to live with confidence in the truth of God.

We are to live with assurance in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Faith family, our doctrine is not to be overtaken by doubt. Our love is not to be overtaken by love.

Our faith is not to be overtaken by falsehood. We are to live with confidence and certainty in the truth of Jesus Christ.

[22 : 56] That's why John writes this letter. That's the urgent issue that he's addressing with these words.

And, you know, the truth of the matter is, is when you have confidence, I'm not talking about arrogance, but when you have confidence in Christ, wow, it makes all the difference in the world. It changes everything. Many of you know, recently, Kirk Cousins, the quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings, was in the news, made headlines for a quote, controversial statement that he made when

he said, related to the COVID-19 pandemic, he said, if I die, I die.

If I die, I die. And of course, as is usually the case in our culture, people twisted that and took it out of context and tried to make it controversial. And I mean, that's just what everybody does with everything anymore.

But, you know, really what he was expressing, if you read the interview in context, is he was really expressing his confidence in Christ. He was, I'm not going to be disrespectful to others and I'm not going to put other people in danger.

[24 : 12] But when it comes to my life, Kirk Cousins was saying, if I die, I die. I mean, to live is Christ, to die is gain.

He was expressing a kind of confidence by his faith in Jesus Christ that allowed him to live with hope and assurance even in a pandemic.

That is exactly the kind of confidence, the kind of certainty that the Apostle John wants for the first century believers as well as the 21st century believers.

Now, with all that background, and you may be thinking that was quite the introduction, well, the text is going to be pretty simple. We won't have to spend a whole lot of time, but it's because of all that background that now it makes sense why John starts this letter the way that he does.

Let's read it again. Verse 1. No introduction, he just gets right to it. That which we have from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes and looked upon and touched with our hands concerning the word of life, the life has been made manifest and we've seen it, we've testified it, proclaimed it to you, the eternal life, which was from the Father and was made manifest to us.

[25 : 37] That 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.

And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. He's starting right out of the gate with the certainty of the gospel.

He's starting right out of the gate with the certainty of who Jesus is because of that Gnostic influence that was taking place in the first century.

He says here, that which we have known, that which was from the beginning. When He says that, He's referring to Jesus. It is, after all, how He started His gospel, the gospel of John.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

[26 : 36] John is absolutely certain and confident as to who Jesus is. That which was, or He that was from the beginning, namely Jesus.

I'm confident in who He is. How do I know? How do I know? Am I certain about Jesus? You better believe I'm certain about Jesus.

After all, I heard. I heard. I heard. I heard. He says, I was an ear witness testimony to the truth of Jesus Christ.

You see, faith family, John didn't hear the news of Jesus from the neighbors. He didn't read it in the Jerusalem Times. He didn't watch it on Fox News or CNN.

He didn't watch the Passion movie. No. John heard Jesus teach on the hillside. He was there when Jesus rebuked the Pharisees.

[27 : 38] He was there when Jesus explained the parables. John spent three years at the University of Jesus Christ and attended every class.

Do I know who Jesus is? You better believe I know who Jesus is because I heard. But I not only heard, I saw.

I saw. John says here, I saw it all unfold before my very eyes. I was not only an ear witness, I was an eyewitness to the person of Jesus Christ.

John is saying, I didn't get my information in a vision like I did the book of Revelation. I didn't see Jesus' picture on TV. No. I saw Jesus walk on water.

I saw Jesus multiply the bread. I saw that dead girl rise. I saw that lame walk. I saw the scars in His hands.

[28 : 41] I saw Jesus in the garden as He was sweating drops of blood. I saw the crucifixion. I saw the empty tomb. I saw Jesus ascend back into heaven.

Do I know? Do I know? You better believe I know because I heard and I saw. But not only that, I beheld.

I beheld. The Greek word here for looked upon actually means to behold. To behold. To behold. In other words, what John is saying, I love this. He's saying, I not only saw the guy, I beheld the glory. I not only saw the man, I beheld the majesty.

Like Peter says in 2 Peter 1, verse 6, for we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

[29 : 57] Do I know? Do I know? You better believe I know because I heard and I saw with my own eyes and I beheld the glory of this man.

But not only that, number four, I touched. I touched. You tell those Gnostics who deny that Jesus came in the flesh.

You tell those skeptics who are experts in things they know nothing about. I touched flesh and bone. I felt the friendly embrace after a long day of ministry.

I felt that encouraging way Jesus would walk up and grab your arm. I touched Him as we passed the cup of wine. I felt flesh upon flesh and bone upon bone.

Do I know? Do I know? Do you better believe I know because I heard and I saw and I beheld and I touched.

[31 : 00] I'm telling you Christians living in the first century. I'm telling you Christians living in the 21st century that when it comes to Jesus Christ, He is not a what if.

He is a we know. He is not a what if. He is a we know. No. Christianity is not based on some mythical dream.

It's not following some enlightened path. It's real truth about a real person that lived in real history in real flesh and blood and there is real evidence and that's the certainty of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Wow, what a powerful beginning to this letter. John just comes right out of the gate and says, do I know? You better believe I know. Let me tell you all the reasons why I know and all the reasons why you can know as well.

And let me ask you this, faith family, if you're not going to believe John, who will you believe? Who will you believe? The college professor living in the 21st century doesn't have a clue what he's talking about?

[32 : 14] Ha! No, no, no, no, no. We're talking about the apostle John who is there. And if you say, well, yeah, but there's been other people that have done that, you know? You got Muhammad or you got Joseph Smith.

Yeah, and you know what the difference is? They all were on their own. They were by themselves. You know, John, the apostle John is just one of many, many, many ear witness and eyewitnesses to the truth of Jesus Christ.

Oh, what confidence this gives us. What assurance this gives us. John says, it's not a what if. It is a we know.

And then notice what he does. John moves now from this certainty of the gospel, this certainty of who Jesus is, and he shows us, and this will be the last point for today, he shows us how that is at the core of our fellowship together.

Look at what he says in verse 3, chapter 1, verse 3. That which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you.

[33 : 36] Here's why. So that you too may have fellowship with us. And indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

What a statement. What a statement. You know what John is saying here? He's saying that Jesus is in fellowship with the Father. And we, the apostles, are in fellowship with Jesus.

And so to the degree that you and I agree on Jesus, we are in fellowship with him and in fellowship with one another.

And of course, the opposite is true. To the degree, remember all the background that I gave you earlier, to the degree that we are not in agreement on who Jesus is, we are not in fellowship with one another.

Notice this on the screen. If we do not have a common faith, we do not have Christian fellowship. That we'll preach.

[34 : 51] If we do not have a common faith, we do not have Christian fellowship. And we're not talking about some kind of fringe issue.

We're not talking about the timing of the rapture. We're not talking about the mode of baptism. These are things that good Christians disagree on.

We're talking about who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? And if we can't agree on Jesus, then we can't have fellowship together.

Now, for some of you, that seems problematic. Maybe you would say, well, that just seems kind of cold, kind of mean. But that's because you and I don't really understand the word fellowship.

When we think of the word fellowship, we kind of think of, you know, hanging out with people. You know, it's like, if you have a cup of coffee with a non-Christian, well, that's a friendly conversation.

[35 : 52] But if you have a cup of coffee with a Christian, well, that's fellowship. Well, that's nonsense. That's not what the Bible teaches at all about the truth behind what fellowship is.

In the first century, if I had time, we'd go there, but I don't have time. Read through the book of Acts. Fellowship wasn't, oh, these people hung out together and they just happened to be Christians.

Fellowship was partnership. It was a belonging to one another. It was a coming together for a common goal and purpose in life.

It may not be the best analogy, but think about the fact that this weekend is the opening weekend of the NFL. And what's going to happen all around, okay?

Maybe not in stadiums as we normally would, but what's going to happen is people from different backgrounds, people from different skin color, people from different financial levels, people that live in different parts of the country, from all different walks of life, they're going to come together and they're going to put on the same color.

[37 : 04] Purple or green or whatever it is because they're brought together in commonality for a common purpose.

Faith family, listen to me. What brings us together as Christians is not hymns and praise songs. It is not denominations.

It is not our belief on third and secondary level of theology. It's not a social cause. It's not the color of our skin.

No, you and I are partners together. You and I belong together because we have put on the same color.

blood red. Blood red. We have a common faith in Jesus Christ and that is the core of our fellowship together.

[38 : 16] Notice it on the screen. The core of Christian fellowship is Christ. The core of Christian fellowship is Christ.

And what this means, notice this also, that if we're not in agreement on Christ, we're not in alignment on Christian fellowship. If we're not in agreement on Christ, on who Jesus is, we are not in alignment on Christian fellowship.

So what's the beginning of this book? How does this book start? This is the simple point that John is communicating right at the very outset and it's this.

When it comes to Jesus Christ, when it comes to Jesus, the one from the beginning, it's not a what if. It's a we know. We heard, we saw, we beheld, we touched.

There ain't no doubt in our mind whatsoever who Jesus is. And that common belief on the person of Jesus Christ is at the core of our fellowship together.

[39 : 30] What's the takeaway today as we've looked at this beginning of the book of 1 John? Just a few things quickly in terms of application. Maybe for some of you today, it's conversion.

It's conversion. That is, maybe you've been skeptical about the claims of Jesus. And today, as I have proclaimed to you the very testimony of the Apostle John, you believe.

You trust. You would say, I'm not going to take the culture's word for it. I'm going to take the eyewitness and earwitness testimony of Jesus Christ.

I believe in Christ. Maybe there's some of you, it's not conversion, but it would be confidence. And your faith has been uncertain. You've struggled with assurance.

And today, the proclamation of God's word is coming to you and strengthening you and giving you a boldness, a confidence in your faith unlike you've had before.

[40 : 37] Maybe thirdly, it's courage. It's courage that you realize that even in uncertain times, you know, kind of like the Kirk Cousins examples, you need to live more courageously.

You need to let the certainty of your faith be lived out in a courageous kind of living. Or maybe lastly, it's Christian fellowship.

You realize the importance of belonging to the people of God, of being in fellowship, partnership with God's people because you share a common faith.

You know, there's an old science fiction movie that dates all the way back to about 2002, a movie called *The Time Machine*. And in the movie, there's a main character called Dr. Alexander and he's trying to save his fiancée who was murdered by a robber.

And so he invents this time machine and he goes way back into the past to see if there's something that he could do to keep her from being killed.

[41 : 47] But what he discovers is that if he messes with this, it's going to create all these other different outcomes and so he just has, he's totally uncertain as to what to do. And so he decides to go way into the future and see if maybe there's some scientific discovery that he could use to then come back and keep his fiancée from dying.

But once again, he realizes that if he messes with this or does that, there's all these other uncertain outcomes. And then someone looks at him and says this, quote, I can look inside your memories, your nightmares, your dreams.

Listen, you are a man haunted by two terrible words. What if?

What if? Maybe today, like that man that walked out of that fortune teller store, like that character in the movie, like those Christians in the first century to whom John is writing, you're haunted by the uncertainty of what if.

Listen, listen to me today. While what if may be a common experience in life, it is not how we are intended to live the Christian life.

[43 : 27] Why? Because Jesus came in the flesh. Because Jesus lived a real human life.

Because Jesus died a real death on the cross. And three days later, a real human body walked out of a real grave.

And on that, faith family, there is no what if. There is only we know.

And all God's people said, Amen. Would you pray with me? God, thank you so much for the truth of your word that we've looked at today.

Thank you for the apostolic witness and testimony of the person of Jesus Christ. That God, our faith is based on real history of a real person that lived a real life and real events of which there is evidence for and confidence in.

[44 : 42] And I pray that that belief, that that confidence would give us boldness to live a life of we know, not a life of what if.

So Spirit of God, work in our life today and give us that confidence in Christ. For we pray it in His name. Amen. Hey, thanks for worshiping with us online today.

I hope this start to our new series has encouraged you. And you know, if you're watching and you would like to speak with someone about a decision that you need to make regarding Christ, regarding your faith in Jesus, reach out to us here at Faith Family Church.

We would love to pray with you. We would love to speak with you. If there's anything that you need care for or questions about. So just email us [forthegospelgatherings at gmail.com](mailto:forthegospelgatherings@gmail.com) [forthegospelgatherings at gmail.com](mailto:forthegospelgatherings@gmail.com) and let us know how we can serve you and encourage you in your faith.

Thanks for worshiping with us today.