

# 1 John 1:1-11

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm Dave and I'm really excited to be here with you this morning.

! I'm really excited to be looking at God's Word.

This book in particular has been impactful in my life. It is full of encouragement and it is full of practical help for our lives.

And I am so excited to be walking into it with you today. If you don't have a Bible today, I would very much love to give you one. They're in the back. They are already bookmarked to today's passage.

The book of 1 John, very near the end of the Bible. And we are going to start in chapter 1, verse 1.

But before we do that, let's pray.

[ 1 : 10 ] Father in heaven, you are a good, good God. And you are God with us. God for us. And we are going to see so much of that in this passage today.

And Lord, as we look at it and we see it is a simple message, but when we recognize that it has major, deep, rich truths behind it, pray that you would help me in that depth, not to make this simple passage complicated, but I would make it clear and that we would all rejoice and we would all rest on the foundation that you have laid for us in your Son, in whose name we pray.

Amen. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands concerning the word of life, the 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.

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. The Bible was written for people who want something lasting.

[ 3 : 01 ] that which was from the beginning. We want something true. That which we have heard. The Bible was written for people who want something beautiful.

We have seen with our eyes. We have looked upon. We want something solid and sure. That which we have touched with our hands.

The Bible was written for people who want life. Life to the full. That which was from the beginning concerning the word of life.

And that, I think, is what we are going to see today in this passage. And as we think about this passage, the first thing that we ask ourselves is that's kind of a weird introduction, isn't it?

Who is this? Who is writing this letter? Who is it addressed to? I mean, when I go to my mailbox, I don't open everything that's addressed to me.

[ 4 : 05 ] I check to see who sent it. I open every card that my mother sends me. But that auto dealership that we bought a car from back in 2012 that sends me Christmas cards, I don't read those, right?

And if it's a bill, I let my wife open it. And the recipient is important too. I mean, I open those things that are addressed to me and I let my wife open the mail that's addressed to her, which is why I make sure all the bills are addressed to her.

And a letter sender, the recipient, it matters just as much as what is written inside because that's why you pay attention to it or not.

And so, who wrote this letter, 1 John? And who is it written to? John was one of Jesus' 12 disciples. He was there for Jesus' earthly ministry and I think we see that in the language he uses here.

He was there when our Lord preached the Sermon on the Mount. He was on the boat when Jesus calmed a raging storm. And he was there when Jesus confronted the Pharisees, when he healed many, when he fed many.

[ 5 : 14 ] And along with Peter and James, John was one of the three disciples Jesus kept closest to himself. Often in the Gospels, we see that those three, Jesus took them aside and showed them parts of his ministry that the others of the 12 did not experience.

It was these three who saw Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. It was these three that he brought into Jairus' house as he raised Jairus' daughter from the dead.

It was he and Peter and James who Christ asked him on his last night in Gethsemane to come closer with him to pray.

And even among these three, John's relationship with Christ stands apart, stands out. It is a little different. In his account of Jesus' life, the Gospel of John, he rarely calls himself by his own name. Instead, he calls himself the beloved disciple or the disciple Jesus loved. We see him leaning on Jesus at the Last Supper and immediately the words of this passage pop into our head, that which we have looked upon and touched.

[ 6 : 34 ] And finally, when Jesus hung on the cross, who did he entrust his mother's care to?

John. John's relationship with Jesus was unique and close. when Jesus ascended to heaven, he was commissioned as one of the apostles, one of the initial leaders of the church.

And even among the other apostles, we see that Peter, James, and John play a prominent role in the early church more than the other apostles to the point where in his letter to the Galatians, Paul calls those three the pillars of the church.

That's who wrote it, who is John writing to. Now at first, it might look like he's kind of associating himself with his readers.

We see a lot of we's in this text. 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.

[ 7 : 43 ] But John isn't saying that his readers were there with him at the Last Supper. In fact, most of them probably were not a part or didn't even ever see Jesus' ministry. He's probably writing to his flock.

He spent most of his ministry in Ephesus, so Turkey. We don't think that they saw the empty tomb or they weren't there when Jesus ascended.

In fact, they're not included in this we. Instead, he says, the life was made manifest and we have seen it and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life.

And so John is writing on behalf of the apostolic community to Christians in the early church and we find that those Christians, John's readers, were in the same place that we are, weren't they?

Together with them, we all live after the cross, after the resurrection, after the ascension of Jesus. The good news of Jesus has been preached to us, but like his readers, we weren't eyewitnesses to it.

[ 8 : 50 ] We didn't see, hear, and touch Jesus. And so, just like the people who received this letter at first, we depend on the apostles to testify and proclaim, as John says, the message of hope and love and joy that we are celebrating here today.

But John was a witness to the resurrection. When he says he saw and heard and touched Jesus, who he calls the eternal life, he's not just talking about the events before the cross.

John saw Jesus alive on the third day. He heard Jesus' voice when he said, after his resurrection, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

He touched Jesus before he ascended to heaven. And so, here we have an eyewitness testimony to the resurrection of our Lord.

And it is a testimony that we can trust. John and the other apostles didn't get rich leading the church.

[ 10 : 03 ] Christianity was the religion of slaves for its first few hundred years. The apostles didn't get accolades. They got arrested. You can read about that in the book of Acts.

The apostles didn't live large. They were chased and beaten and shipwrecked and murdered and mocked for their testimony. History tells us that John, this John, died in prison for this message.

If Jesus didn't defeat death like John proclaims to us, then he got nothing from this message except for persecution, poverty, and death.

But that's not what he says he did get from it, is it? Verse 4. His sufferings didn't deter him because he had something better. He beheld and touched our risen Lord.

He preached the gospel for joy in the midst of his persecution. And this points to something even more. Christianity is not a philosophy.

[ 11 : 11 ] It is not a set of doctrines. Our faith is not a set of principles. Certainly our scriptures have those things and it is important that we pay attention to them. But at its core, our faith is in a risen savior.

Our faith consists in this. The Lord of life was born a man, died for our sins, and rose bodily from the grave for our life.

So that's who wrote the letter, who he wrote it to, and why we can trust him. Why did he send the letter? I really like it when people are clear about why they're telling me something.

And John is actually very clear. If you look to his conclusion, in chapter 5, verse 13, he says, I write these things, that is, I wrote this letter. 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.

Earlier, when John wrote his gospel, he actually did something very similar. His account of Jesus' life and teaching and resurrection, he told us why he wrote that, too. In John, chapter 20, verses 30 and 31, he wrote this.

[ 12 : 30 ] Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

And now, here in his epistle, he says, I write these things to you who do believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

So he wrote the gospel to help us believe, and he has written this letter so that in believing we may know that we have life in his name.

So 1 John is about assurance, if we can put it that way. Now, why do his readers need assurance, and why do we need assurance of our faith?

faith? The central call of Christianity can be found in Romans 10. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead and you will be saved.

[ 13 : 40 ] With so simple a message, and with grace so freely available to us, it is easy for doubt to creep in. Is that really all I have to do?

And we'll talk about that later, how faith is actually a big deal, a big jump, a big leap. But is that all I have to do? Or maybe we think, do I really believe hard enough?

Any number of doubts can unsettle us and shake us and push us towards anxiety. And doubt doesn't only come from within us.

It comes from outside, from people asking us to doubt. As we'll see in chapter 2, there are false teachers among this crowd. They twist the message of Jesus.

They lead lives that don't look like his. And they don't actually love the people that he died for. Yet, they're trying to persuade John's hearers to their way of thinking, to build their platform.

[ 14 : 51 ] And John's readers need reassurance about where the truth is really found. And the world brings those same doubts to us. That can't be true, they say.

Or, that's awful when they see the claims of Christ that he has in our lives. Or, that's just stupid when they hear the claims of the resurrection.

And so, what do these internal and external sources of doubt do to us? They wage a quiet war against our souls.

when it hurts and sorrows overwhelm us, God's word tells us, be still and know that I am God.

And underneath that is the foundation of a God who loves and cares for his people and comes and dwells with them and sacrifices for them. But if all of that is undermined, if we have no assurance in that truth, then the comfort that scripture is designed to provide for us is gone.

[ 16 : 00 ] in that way and in a million more, our assurance of our salvation, our assurance of who God is, and our assurance of his holy, inerrant, authoritative word grounds and is the bandrock of our peace and our hope and our happiness.

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. when all around my soul gives way, he then is all my hope and stay. This is a short letter, just five chapters.

And it answers one question about our assurance. And it comes up in three different contexts. first, as we've already seen in chapter five, verse 13, that he wants to assure his flock of their own salvation.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know you have eternal life. Again, in chapter two, our second item, we're going to see, we're going to be introduced to false teachers who are saying that Jesus didn't come in the flesh, who say that Jesus doesn't demand a holy life from his followers.

And he isn't very interested in the people that he died for. They claim some sort of hidden knowledge, and that is unsettling John's flock.

[ 17 : 29 ] So he wants to assure them. In chapter two, verse 26, he says, I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. And a third place that he's going to bring assurance to bear in our lives is just our daily lives, actually.

This is a really practical book. We're going to see that today, next week, and every passage to come, and it's actually on purpose, I think. In two weeks, John is going to be really explicit. In chapter two, verse one, he's going to say, my little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. So we see that this is going to be relevant every moment of our day. And John is going to ask us to examine ourselves. Saved people believe the truth about Jesus. They love his church, and they obey him.

To be clear, Jesus doesn't save them because they do those things. Rather, when he gives them new life, he gives them new hearts, and they can't help but have renewed life and a loving fellowship with him.

[ 18 : 41 ] And that is actually where John is chiefly concerned. A life lived joyfully with the God who sacrificed everything for us.

We will see the words abide and remain in him over and over throughout this book. The Christian life isn't just, you're saved, now behave until you die and go to heaven.

heaven. No. The Christian life is bright, living, ongoing fellowship with Jesus, the word of life.

It was from the beginning who John touched, and is even nearer to us today than when John stood face to face with him. And John is going to show us what that new life looks like.

He's going to encourage us and give us assurance based on three things. things. We're going to look at our own hearts and lives and examine them. We're going to say, what does our obedience look like?

[ 19 : 46 ] Then we're going to ask, what message do we proclaim? And then we're going to ask, do we love the people that Jesus died for? When we see those things breaking through, we'll recognize that's God's life breaking through in us.

Now, there's three things that the truth, the obedience, and the love. John is going to visit each of those three times in this book. And each time he's going to look at them from a different angle.

And so we're going to get a really clear picture, a whole picture of the Christian life, in what we believe, in what we do, and how we love. So where does John start?

Well, he starts at the beginning. That which was from the beginning, chapter 1, verse 1. And actually we see that he begins this letter very much like he began the gospel of John.

In John chapter 1, he said, in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

[ 20 : 56 ] In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. what John called the word, in the prologue to his gospel, he here calls, in our passage, the word of life, or the eternal life.

That's Jesus. He was from the beginning. He was with the Father. He formed the world and everything in it.

And because he is God, he is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-seeing, he orders the universe according to his will.

He raises up and casts down rulers and nations. History belongs to him. The universe belongs to him. We belong to him. But that's not John's only concern, is it?

What does he spend most of his time, most of his words, most of his energy talking about? He says that Jesus, God before all, God above all, humbled himself, came to this world, took on a human nature, and dwelt among us.

[ 22 : 14 ] So John can say in verse 2, he heard Jesus. He saw Jesus. He looked upon Jesus and touched him with his hands. This is the doctrine that theologians call the incarnation.

Jesus taking on the nature of a man. Now, it could get really technical and really dry, but what does it mean, and why do we care about it?

Here's the thing. Truth has consequences, and the bigger the truth, the bigger the consequences.

And the more that God loves us, which is infinite, the better those big consequences are.

So this is a big truth, and it has a big payoff. Today. Let's unpack the incarnation a little and kind of figure out what it means.

There are three things that we need to remember. First, Jesus was, is, and will always be God. He is equal to the Father and the Spirit in his infinity, in his power, and in his majesty.

[ 23 : 18 ] He is of the same substance, the Father and the Spirit. second, Jesus took on the nature of a human man.

Jesus didn't just animate a human body like a puppet. At his conception in Nazareth, he became a human man, with our limitations, with our frailties and our weaknesses.

And third, Jesus remains truly God and truly man. Each nature, his divinity, and his humanity, is preserved in the one person, Jesus, the Messiah.

Now that is the truth. What are the consequences? Why does that matter? Why does John care so much to tell us about that? He goes, he's stumbling over himself to express this.

Well, it matters for a lot of reasons and we will discuss two today. First, it makes the gospel possible. He was our representative, our substitute on the cross.

[ 24 : 27 ] The livestock sacrifices of the old covenant temple system could never truly stand in our place. They only pointed forward to someone who could and because they were nothing like us.

They couldn't be our representative. So our Savior had to be a man. But no human could atone for the sins of the whole world. So our Savior also had to be God.

Jesus, the God-man, is our perfect representative. He is truly one of us, so he can truly represent us. And he is truly God Almighty. And the infinite value of his life can pay the penalty of all our sin. And so this doctrine of the incarnation is critical to the gospel. So it's really important on an eternal scale. Your salvation depends on it.

But it's also encouraging to us in this day, in this moment. moment. And that's where John takes us today.

[ 25 : 42 ] His primary concern isn't the atonement. His primary concern, what is it, verse three?

Fellowship with God. The God of the Bible stands before and above history.

But he cares about us who live moment by moment and day by day. He is matchless in his majesty, but he took on the form of a servant.

He is complete and independent. He does not need anything from us. But he took on the form of a friend. So John can say in verse three that we have fellowship with him.

See, he is unknowable. He is infinite. He is holy. He is unchangeable. And we don't have minds capable of understanding him. But he has gotten down on one knee like a father who's embracing his child.

And he has spoken to us face to face. He is not distant. He is not removed. And that's why the Bible tells us we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.

[ 27 : 01 ] But one who is in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin. That's the representative part. And here immediately, this is the book of Hebrews, follows the fellowship.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Jesus knows what it is to feel hunger.

He knows what it is to laugh and to cry. He knows what it is to be tempted to sin. He has experienced being abandoned by his friends, betrayed by one of them.

He has felt the pain of losing a friend to the grave. He knows what it's like to be called names, to be publicly put to shame, and he knows pain. And so when we pray to the Lord, we do not pray to a stoic, unfeeling force in the sky.

We don't pray to a God who knows about people and our problems. We pray to a God who walked a lifetime in our shoes. And that leads, friends, to joy.

[ 28 : 16 ] Verse 4. Consider this. In verse 3, John tells us, that which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you. So that you too might have fellowship with us.

And indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. What does it mean for me to have fellowship with the triune God? It means I am known completely and I am loved completely.

One Christian song says to God, you see the depths of my heart and you love me the same. when I have that, that idea that Jesus died for me, bought me for himself, drew me into lifelong fellowship with him, it changes my relationship with God and it changes my relationship with his people. Because he has made me alive to his scriptures, I hear his voice every day as he speaks to me. And because I have confidence to draw near to his throne, I can pour out my heart and my soul to him in prayer.

There is nothing I need hide from him, there is nothing that I cannot take to him. That is why John says, indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and the Son.

[ 29 : 43 ] And it also changes the way that we relate to one another. And so this is another ongoing effect of Jesus coming and living as a man for us.

It means I don't need to look for security in my human relationships. I don't need to find my acceptance there. I don't need to find my comfort primarily in other people.

Now, it is good and we are commanded to find our comfort in other people as well. But it is not the bedrock of that comfort. And that is so important. If I'm not depending on my friends for those things, ultimately, it means that I can take a risk and be open.

I can take a risk and be transparent in a way that I could never do apart from Christ. Next Sunday is September 18th. My wife's due date is the next day, September 19th.

The elders decided it was probably unwise that I preach the day before my wife's due date. I thought that was too. And so Jordan will be bringing God's word to us next week.

[ 31 : 01 ] And so the other night we sat down to discuss the passage that he'll be talking about. And by the way, just parenthetically, I'm really jealous. It's such a good passage. You are in for such a treat.

It is an incredible text. But after we talked about the passage, we got on to talking about other things. How's life? How's family? How's work? We're both elders here at Shoreline, so we talked about some elders things.

And then something unusual happened. Something that doesn't normally happen in most people's conversations. Jordan said, I noticed you made a conclusion on something before you had all the information.

Now, some of that is because I move a mile a minute. And some of that is also because I get really excited about stuff sometimes. Like ministry things. But some of it is sin, too.

Pride. Judgmentalism. Thinking that I always know best. And Jordan took a huge risk, didn't he, in saying that.

[ 32 : 13 ] How do people react to being called out for what is at best weakness and at worst sin? How do people react to that? You can't go to your coworker, you can't go to your friend like that without risking the relationship being fractured.

Because we react defensiveness, with bitterness. And so pointing out sin or weakness can be the end of a relationship.

But, because he was grounded in an unshakable fellowship with the Lord, he doesn't need my approval to get through the day.

Because he already has God. And he could risk saying the hard thing that was actually for my good. And it really was for my good.

Next week, when he brings us, starting in verse 5, we'll see and consider what it means that God has no darkness whatsoever. Any sin that lingers in my soul puts a barrier between full fellowship between me and the Lord.

[ 33 : 28 ] And so, what he was actually doing was helping me shine a light on something that puts up a speed bump on my walk with God. And that is exactly the point of this passage.

Fellowship with the Father and His resurrected Son. Now, that's friendship. Do you want to have friendship the way it was truly meant to be?

taking risks for the other person's good? Well, it means that we must first invest in the solid ground of friendship with Jesus Christ.

Because only then are we free to be good friends and free to receive hard words for our own good. And that leads us to today's final word of this passage, joy.

John finishes his introduction saying, and we are writing these things that our joy may be complete. John finds in the Lord and in seeing his flock flourish in the Lord, he finds joy there.

[ 34 : 46 ] Now, if you've been part of Shoreline's community groups or part of the Bible studies that preceded them in the years past, you've probably shared some of that joy, watching others grow and find their own joy in the Lord.

There's something special about watching your brothers and sisters in Christ grow spiritually, and John is pointing that out to us right now. Finding ways to rest in God when life is hard, that's a beautiful thing.

Dying to self in order to love others or dying to self to kill a nagging sin, that's beautiful. Walking with him the valley of the shadow of death is hard and it is beautiful.

And so watching God shine through brothers and sisters as they abide in him is a joy. Are you looking for something lasting today?

It is found in he who was from the beginning. Are you looking for something that is true? It is found in his sure testimony. The apostles that he preserved to write these things to us who saw him and heard him and touched him.

[ 36 : 14 ] Are you looking for something beautiful? There is nothing more beautiful than the good news of Jesus. True God and true man giving himself for us. Are you looking for life and joy?

Well, this passage clearly teaches us his name is the eternal life and in his presence there is joy forever more.

Let's pray. Father, this passage is so simple yet it contains such big truths, such glorious truths, truths that make the gospel possible, truths that make fellowship with you possible, and truths that make real lasting friendships, friendships the way they were meant to be possible.

Lord, for those who have not yet believed in your names that they might have eternal life, I pray that these truths would draw them to yourself. They would find in Christ a savior who is for them and wants to live with them.

And for those who do have Christ. Lord, I pray that we would have the assurance that John wants for us so that we can live in the joy of your salvation.

[ 38 : 06 ] salvation. And so that as we walk every day, we can take the risks that this passage encourages us towards, so that we can be good and true friends.

And so that we can receive those hard words ourselves with grace and humility. Lord, be glorified in us as we seek to abide, to remain in you.

We pray these things in the matchless name of Christ our King, the God-man. Amen. Amen.