

The book of
FIRST JOHN

Week of Monday, September 21, 2025

1 John 1:1-4

1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— 3 what we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

O – Observe what it teaches

P – Practice this in your life

E – Express this in your prayers

Weekly Devotional

Back in February, Christina and I were blessed to go to Israel, and I was overwhelmed. At first, it was simply because of the new surroundings. There were new sights, sounds, and smells. And because I love the Bible and history, being able to see these places was amazing.

But about halfway through the trip, something happened that affected me in a different way. We were standing at Caesarea Philippi, the place where Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" and Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." I had read those words countless times. I knew they were true. But standing there, looking at the same landscape Jesus and His disciples would have seen, I was overwhelmed by a truth that I had always believed but that suddenly felt much more tangible.

The words of Scripture reveal to us real events that happened in real places involving real people. Sometimes we read those words on the page and know they are true, but they can still feel somewhat abstract. But seeing the places where these events took place brought them a little closer to home for me. These weren't simply stories I had read. These things actually happened.

As John opens this first letter, he is testifying that he was even closer to the events he writes about. He tells us that what he is proclaiming is what he heard with his own ears, saw with his own eyes, and even touched with his own hands. John was there. He didn't experience Jesus from a distance. He encountered Him up close. And therefore, John isn't presenting Christianity as an abstract philosophy or a collection of good ideas. He's saying, in effect, We encountered Jesus.

The truth about Jesus that we find in Scripture is real. Our faith is built on something that actually happened. Jesus Christ came into the world. He was heard, seen, and touched. John and the other apostles weren't passing along a theory; they were proclaiming what they had personally witnessed.

Now, we haven't seen Jesus in the same way John did, but our faith rests on the testimony of those who did. And throughout 1 John, John is going to keep bringing us back to the reality of Jesus and what it means to know Him. In fact, near the end of the letter, he tells us why he wrote: "I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

So our goal of this series isn't simply that we know more about the book of 1 John. John wants us to know God more deeply, walk more closely with Him, and experience the fellowship we have with His people because we belong to Him. And that gives us something to think about as we begin. If Jesus is truly who John says He is, what difference should that reality make in my life? It is possible to believe that Jesus really lived, really died, and really rose again and yet live as though those truths are distant from our everyday lives. John doesn't give us room to do that. The Jesus he proclaims is not merely someone to believe facts about; He is someone to know and follow with our lives.

Over the coming weeks, John will call us to walk in the light, confess our sin, obey Christ, love one another, remain in the truth, resist the world, and have confidence that we belong to God. These aren't disconnected commands. They are what life begins to look like when the reality of Jesus moves from something we believe in our minds to someone we know and follow with our lives.

My prayer as we begin this series is that we won't simply come to know 1 John better. I pray that through the truth John proclaims, we will know Jesus better.

-Devotional written by Jason McDonald

Read Also:

1 John 1

John 1:1–18 — John identifies Jesus as the eternal Word who became flesh and lived among us.

Luke 1:1–4 — Luke explains why he carefully recorded Jesus' story.

John 20:24–31 — John explains that his Gospel was written so we might believe and have life in Jesus.

Acts 4:1–22 — Peter and John testify boldly about what they have seen and heard concerning Jesus.

2 Peter 1:16–21 — Peter emphasizes that the apostles were eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty.

John 15:9–17 — Jesus describes a relationship with Him as abiding in Him with fullness of joy.

1 John 5:9–13 — John explains that his purpose is for believers to know they have eternal life.

Group Discussion Questions

What stands out to you about the way John describes Jesus in 1 John 1:1–4? What do we learn from his repeated references to hearing, seeing, observing, and touching? Why do you think John places such emphasis on the fact that he and the other apostles personally encountered Jesus?

John says that he is proclaiming what he has seen and heard "so that you may also have fellowship with us." What does Christian fellowship mean, and how is our fellowship with one another connected to our fellowship with God?

Verse 4 says that John is writing so that his readers' joy may be complete. What connection do you see between knowing Jesus and experiencing genuine joy?

It is possible to believe that Jesus is real and still live as though He is distant from our everyday lives. What are some ways we can unintentionally do this?

As we begin this study, what do you most want God to teach you or change in you through 1 John?

John's stated purpose at the end of the letter is that believers may "know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). Why do you think assurance is important to the Christian life, and what would it look like for you to live with greater confidence in what Christ has done for you?

Week of Monday, September 28, 2025

1 John 1:5–2:2

1 John 1

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him. **6** If we say, “We have fellowship with him,” and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth. **7** If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say, “We have not sinned,” we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1 John 2

1 My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous one. **2** He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

This weekend at our men's retreat, we talked about putting Christ above everything else. It's a truth we gladly affirm when we're sitting with other men, singing, opening our Bibles, and having honest conversations. But we also need to live it out when we go home. What happens when I'm tired, impatient, or interrupted? Do my words and choices show that I value Jesus most?

I don't have to look very far into my own life to see how much I still need God's grace.

John begins this passage by saying, "God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him." That means there is nothing about our lives we can keep hidden from him. He sees the things other people notice, and he sees what is going on in our hearts.

We can respond by making excuses. We can tell ourselves we were just tired, that it wasn't a big deal, or that we'll do better next time. But John says that if we claim we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Making excuses may help us feel better for a moment, but it keeps us from dealing honestly with God.

Here is the encouragement: walking in the light doesn't mean pretending we have it all together. It means coming to God honestly. John says that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. We can admit what is wrong because Jesus has already done what is needed to make us clean.

That is what confession is. We stop explaining away our sin and tell God the truth about it. And we can trust his promise: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

John doesn't want us to become comfortable with sin. He writes, "My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin." But he also knows we will still fail. So he adds, "If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one."

That is such good news. When I sin, my hope is not that I can come up with a good enough explanation or make up for it by having a better day tomorrow. My hope is Jesus. He knows the truth about my sin, and he has given himself for it. He is my advocate with the Father.

Whatever this past week has looked like for you, this passage gives us a way forward. When God shows us something that needs to change, we don't have to hide it or defend it. We can bring it into the light, confess it, and take the next step of obedience, trusting that Jesus will meet us with the forgiveness he has promised.

-Devotional written by Eric Foster

Read Also:

1 John 1

John 3:19–21 - Coming into the light

Psalm 32:1–5 - The relief of confession

Psalm 51:1–12 - Asking God for a clean heart

Proverbs 28:13 - Confessing instead of hiding

Hebrews 4:14–16 - Approaching God for mercy

Romans 8:31–34 - Christ interceding for us

Group Discussion Questions

John says that “God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him.” What does this tell us about God’s character, and why does it matter for how we approach him?

In verses 6, 8, and 10, John describes three things we might *say* about ourselves. What do these claims have in common, and what truth is John urging us to face?

How can John call believers to walk in the light while also saying that we still need to confess sin? What does walking in the light actually mean?

John calls Jesus both our advocate and the atoning sacrifice for our sins. What does each description tell us about what Jesus has done for us?

What are some ordinary ways we minimize or hide sin, even from ourselves?

What makes confession difficult for you? How does knowing that Jesus is your advocate change the way you come to God?

Week of Monday, October 5, 2025

1 John 2:3-17

3 This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands. **4** The one who says, “I have come to know him,” and yet doesn’t keep his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. **5** But whoever keeps his word, truly in him the love of God is made complete. This is how we know we are in him: **6** The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked.

7 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old command that you have had from the beginning. The old command is the word you have heard. **8** Yet I am writing you a new command, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. **9** The one who says he is in the light but hates his brother or sister is in the darkness until now. **10** The one who loves his brother or sister remains in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. **11** But the one who hates his brother or sister is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and doesn’t know where he’s going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

12 I am writing to you, little children,
since your sins have been forgiven
on account of his name.

13 I am writing to you, fathers,
because you have come to know
the one who is from the beginning.
I am writing to you, young men,
because you have conquered the evil one.

14 I have written to you, children,
because you have come to know the Father.
I have written to you, fathers,
because you have come to know
the one who is from the beginning.
I have written to you, young men,
because you are strong,
God’s word remains in you,
and you have conquered the evil one.

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possessions—is not from the Father, but is from the world. **17** And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

When I look at our congregation gathered for worship on a Sunday morning, I am thankful to see the wide range of ages that make up Living Hope Church. I am thankful to see gray hair, I am thankful to see babies, I am thankful to see toddlers and teenagers. In short, I am thankful that our church isn't made up of people in the same stage of life as me. There are many younger and many older—both in terms of age and in terms of how long they have been walking with the Lord.

John's church had a similar wide range in ages and in maturity levels in the faith. In 1 John 2:12-14 he gives us a highly poetic section of Scripture that encourages three age groups: little children, fathers, and young men—with most commentators stating that “fathers” refers to mature believers and “young men” referring to younger believers, regardless of gender.

John addresses each group twice with some slight differences in the wording, but the poetic nature of this passage was supposed to stick in the minds of his readers. For John, it is imperative for his readers to know who they are in Christ and what he has done for them through his death on the cross and that is why he is writing this letter to them.

“*(Little) children*” refers to all believers, it is how John typically addresses the whole church (as in 2:1, 2:18, 2:28, etc.), and he reminds us all that “[our] sins have been forgiven on account of [Jesus's] name” and that “[we] have come to know the Father.” In short, he reminds us of the truth of the Gospel—that because Jesus died for our sins we have been reconciled to God in such a way that we now know him as our Father. That is why we are called *children* in the first place, because we are *his* children—born of God (John 1:12) and given the Spirit of Adoption that calls out “Abba! Father!” (Rom. 8:15).

“*Fathers*” refers to mature men and women in the church, who have been walking with the Lord for a long time and can testify to his faithfulness throughout their lifetime. John reminds them twice that “[they] have come to know the one who is from the beginning.” John wants them to know that his pastoral instructions to them are anchored in the same Jesus that John (and perhaps they themselves!) knew, heard, saw, and touched (compare with 1:1). As those with more experience living life in a fallen world and with more experience knowing Christ, he reminds them that what they have in Christ is eternal life in him.

“*Young men*” includes both men and women who are growing and maturing in their faith, and John tells them that “[they] are strong, God's Word remains in [them], and [they] have conquered the evil one.” John is reminding them and encouraging them in their zeal for Christ, and that though they may not be as seasoned as the older people in the congregation, they are strong in the Lord and have conquered the Devil in him and through him.

Regardless of what demographic we may fall in, the fact of the matter remains that the entirety of John's letter—and all the encouragement and instruction that he gives—is based on the fact that we have been given eternal life in Christ, who is our Advocate before the Father and the atoning sacrifice that covers our sin and reconciles us to God (2:1-2)

-Devotional written by Rick Leeman

Read Also:

1 John 2

John 1:10-14

John 15:1-8

Romans 8:12-17

Ephesians 6:10-18

1 Timothy 4:12-16

Titus 2:1-8

1 Peter 5:1-9

Group Discussion Questions

How does 2:12-14 relate to the rest of the passage (2:3-11) and to what John has written so far in his letter?

What are your initial thoughts reading the statements of 2:3-11? Why is it important that vv. 12-14 follow?

Why does John refer to us as “children”? What does this imply about us and our relationship to God?

Do you think that you fit in the “fathers”/mature category or the “young men”/maturing category? Why?

What is the “old command” that John is writing to them? But why does he say that it is “new” “because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining”? (2:8).

What recurring theme’s from the John’s Gospel show up in this passage? (Hint: read John 1 and John 15)

Week of Monday, October 12, 2025

1 John 2:18-27

18 Children, it is the last hour. And as you have heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. By this we know that it is the last hour. **19** They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. However, they went out so that it might be made clear that none of them belongs to us.

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. **21** I have not written to you because you don't know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie comes from the truth. **22** Who is the liar, if not the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This one is the antichrist: the one who denies the Father and the Son. **23** No one who denies the Son has the Father; he who confesses the Son has the Father as well.

24 What you have heard from the beginning is to remain in you. If what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, then you will remain in the Son and in the Father. **25** And this is the promise that he himself made to us: eternal life.

26 I have written these things to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. **27** As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you don't need anyone to teach you. Instead, his anointing teaches you about all things and is true and is not a lie; just as it has taught you, remain in him.

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

There have been people in my life whose promises I knew I could trust. If they told me they would do something, I believed them. I knew their character, and I knew they would follow through, as far as it was within their control.

But that last part matters. Even the most dependable person has limits. Someone can sincerely intend to keep a commitment, only to have illness, an unexpected circumstance, or something beyond their control make it impossible. Their willingness hasn't changed, but their ability has.

With God, we never need to make that distinction. He is both faithful to His word and able to fulfill it. Nothing catches Him by surprise, and nothing can prevent Him from accomplishing what He has promised.

That gives particular weight to John's words in verse 25: "And this is the promise that he himself made to us: eternal life."

John gives this assurance in the middle of a warning. People had left the fellowship and were trying to lead others away from the truth about Jesus. They denied that Jesus is the Christ, and John makes clear that we cannot reject the Son and still have the Father. What we believe about Jesus matters because eternal life is found in Him.

Imagine how unsettling this must have been for those believers. People they had known and worshiped alongside were now rejecting the message they once professed. Perhaps some were wondering, "Have we believed the right thing? Can we still be sure?"

John directs them back to what they had heard from the beginning. They didn't need a different message or a new version of Jesus. They needed to remain in the truth of the gospel they had received. The Holy Spirit, whom John describes as their anointing, would help them recognize the truth and resist the lies.

And right in the middle of those instructions comes this promise: eternal life.

Our confidence rests on the God who made that promise. He has given us life through His Son, who died for our sins and rose again. Eternal life is more than an endless existence someday. It is life in fellowship with the Father and the Son, life that begins now and continues beyond death.

That doesn't mean God has promised an easy life. We can still experience disappointment, uncertainty, sickness, and loss. But none of those things can overturn His promise. Even death cannot prevent Him from giving His people the life He has promised in Christ.

John's response to that assurance is simple: remain in Him. Keep trusting the Jesus you have heard proclaimed in the gospel. When another voice offers something more appealing, return to His Word. When doubts arise, bring them to Him. When life becomes difficult, remember that your circumstances have not weakened His ability to keep His promise.

The people we trust most can only promise what they hope they will be able to do. God promises what He will certainly accomplish.

Whatever we face today, those who belong to Christ have a future secured by His faithfulness: He has promised us eternal life, and He will keep His word.

-Devotional written by Eric Foster

Read Also:

1 John 2

1 John 5:1–13 — Eternal life is found in God’s Son.

John 10:22–30 — Jesus promises eternal life and lasting security.

John 15:1–11 — Remaining in Christ and His Word.

John 14:15–27 — The Holy Spirit teaches believers the truth.

2 John 1:7–11 — Rejecting deception and remaining in Christ’s teaching.

Hebrews 6:13–20 — God’s unchangeable promise gives us firm hope.

Group Discussion Questions

In verses 18–23, what distinguishes the truth about Jesus from the lies being taught? Why does denying the Son also mean rejecting the Father?

Why does John urge believers to hold on to what they “heard from the beginning” (v. 24)? How does that help us evaluate teaching today?

What does the promise of eternal life in verse 25 tell us about God? How does knowing who made the promise strengthen our confidence in it?

How does the Holy Spirit help believers recognize and remain in the truth (vv. 20, 27)? How does this fit with John writing to teach them?

What voices or influences can draw us away from the truth about Jesus? Why might we be tempted to listen to them?

What does remaining in Christ look like in our everyday lives? What helps you keep His Word close?

Where do you need the assurance of God’s promise right now? How might the certainty of eternal life change the way you face that situation?