

john 15:4  
**A b i d e** in **ME**



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 4 - Number 2  
The week of October 21, 2018

Sermon Series: *The Real Thing*  
Created for Community  
1 John 1:1-4

**THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT**

**Biblical Community**

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

**Disillusioned with Church or Your Growth Group?**

*It's a part of God's plan.*

By Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*(An excerpt from his book, Life Together)*

Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves.

By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world. He does not abandon us to those rapturous experiences and lofty moods that come over us like a dream. God is not a God of the emotions but the God of truth. Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God's sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it.

The sooner this shock of disillusionment comes to an individual and to a community, the better for both. A community which cannot bear and cannot survive such a crisis, which insists upon keeping its illusion when it should be shattered, permanently loses in that moment the promise of Christian community. Sooner or later it will collapse. Every human wish dream that is injected into the Christian community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be banished if genuine community is to survive.

*He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial.*

**Beware of visions for church**

God hates visionary dreaming; it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. The man who fashions a visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others, and by himself. He enters the community of Christians with his demands, sets up his own laws, and judges the brethren and God himself accordingly. He stands adamant, a living reproach to all others in the circle of the brethren. He acts as if he is the creator of the Christian community, as if his dream binds men together.

When things do not go his way, he calls the effort a failure. When his ideal picture is destroyed, he sees the community going to smash. So he becomes, first an accuser of his brethren, then an accuser of God, and finally the despairing accuser of himself. Because God has already laid the only foundation of our fellowship, because God has bound us together in one body with other Christians in Jesus Christ, long before we entered into common life with them, we enter into that common life not as demanders but as thankful recipients. We thank God for giving us brethren who live by his call, by his forgiveness, and his promise. We do not complain of what God does not give us; we rather thank God for what he does give us daily.

And is not what has been given us enough: brothers, who will go on living with us through sin and need under the blessing of his grace? Is the divine gift of Christian fellowship anything less than this, any day, even the most difficult and distressing day? Even when sin and misunderstanding burden the communal life, is not the sinning brother still a brother, with whom I, too, stand under the Word of Christ? Will not his sin be a constant occasion for me to give thanks that both of us may live in the forgiving love of God in Christ Jesus? Thus, the very hour of disillusionment with my brother becomes incomparably salutary, because it so thoroughly teaches me that neither of us can ever live by our own words and deeds, but only by the one Word and Deed which really binds us together--the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. When the morning mists of dreams vanish, then dawns the bright day of Christian fellowship . . .

### **When fellowship is paltry and petty**

If we do not give thanks daily for the Christian fellowship in which we have been placed, even where there is no great experience, no discoverable riches, but much weakness, small faith, and difficulty; if on the contrary, we only keep complaining to God that everything is so paltry and petty, so far from what we expected, then we hinder God from letting our fellowship grow according to the measure and riches which are there for us all in Jesus Christ.

This applies in a special way to the complaints often heard from pastors and zealous members about their congregations. A pastor should not complain about his congregations, certainly never to other people, but also not to God. A congregation has not been entrusted to him in order that he should become its accuser before God and men. When a person becomes alienated from a Christian community in which he has been placed and begins to raise complaints about it, he had better examine himself first to see whether the trouble is not due to his wish dream that should be shattered by God; and if this be the case, let him thank God for leading him into this predicament.

But if not, let him nevertheless guard against ever becoming an accuser of the congregation before God. Let him rather accuse himself for his unbelief. Let him pray to God for understanding of his own failure and his particular sin, and pray that he may not wrong his brethren. Let him, in the consciousness of his own guilt, make intercession for his brethren. Let him do what he is committed to do, and thank God . . .

*What may appear weak and trifling to us may be great and glorious to God.*

Just as the Christian should not be constantly feeling his spiritual pulse, so, too, the Christian community has not been given to us by God for us to be constantly taking its temperature. The more thankfully we daily receive what is given to us, the more surely and steadily will fellowship increase and grow from day to day as God pleases.

### **STEP ONE . . .**

#### **READING** what the passage says

Thoughtful Bible reading is essential for every Christian who is serious about their relationship with God. God doesn't want a one-sided relationship with us. He calls us to make every effort to work out our own spiritual growth by spending time in His Word and by wrestling to understand what He wants us to know.

Read 1 John 1:1-4. Then using the following chart, spend some time reflecting on how the passage relates to each question.

#### **1 John 1:1-4**

<sup>1</sup>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—  
<sup>2</sup>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—  
<sup>3</sup>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.  
<sup>4</sup>And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

What does this tell me about God?	What does this tell me about myself?	What difference does it make?

**STEP TWO . . .**

**OBSERVING** how the passage moves  
Return to the passage and **mark key words, phrases and movements:**

- Circle all of the words in these passages that speak of the Triune God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, etc.).
- Underline the significant verbs/action words in these passages.
- In **1 John 1:1**, underline the phrases: “the beginning,” “we have heard,” “we have seen with our eyes,” “we looked upon and have touched with our hands”
- In **1 John 1:1**, highlight “the word of life”
- In **1 John 1:2**, underline the phrases: life made manifest,” “we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life,” “with the father,” “made manifest to us”
- In **1 John 1:3**, underline “that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you”
- In **1 John 1:3**, highlight the phrases: “so that you too may have fellowship with us,” “our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ”
- In **1 John 1:4**, highlight “our joy may be complete”

**STEP THREE . . .**

**UNDERSTANDING** what the passage means  
*This commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.*

**Commentary**

**1 That which was.** Or, “what was ....” This is the first of four clauses that declare the scope of the Incarnation or the embodiment of the Son of God. Notice that the main verb **proclaim** which completes the series of clauses, does not occur until verse 3.

**From the beginning.** There are three possibilities as to what is meant: (1) The beginning of Jesus’ earthly life (cf. John 15:27; 16:4); (2) The eternal nature of Jesus (cf. Colossians 1:18); or, (3) God’s plan from the dawn or pre-dawn of time. In the message, Pastor Paul stressed the first view though all three ideas are important.

**Which we.** John’s **we** is probably a reference to the eyewitness of all the Apostles. It may have been used as a literary device (i.e. the editorial *we*) referring only to John himself. Regardless, John is a direct eyewitness of what he proclaims. The testimony of all the Apostles pointed to the historical reality of the Incarnation.

**Heard ... seen ... touched** are all expressions consistent with firsthand sense perception. The word “have heard” implies that John heard Jesus speak and His Words were still ringing in his ears. The phrase **which we have seen with our eyes** is used only here in the NT to emphasize direct, personal acquaintance with Jesus. What John had seen still lingers in his mind’s eye. **Touched with our hands** also denotes physical contact. Jesus was God in human flesh and therefore, a real Man.

**Looked upon** further reinforces John’s argument that he physically saw Jesus with his own eyes (cf. also the story of Simeon in Luke 2:26). This denotes an intelligent beholding; a careful and deliberate gaze.

**Concerning the word of life.** John is referring to Jesus, the Incarnate Word. Jesus is the message of life because He is life itself, and He gives life.

2 Verse 2 is a parenthesis between the first and third verses. **The life was made manifest.** Or, the life appeared and was revealed for people to see. The verb **was** denotes a past event with continuing implications.

**And we have seen it and testify to it.** John is a reliable eyewitness (cf. John 1:7, 8, 15, 32, 34 where the word **testify** was also used regarding John the Baptist).

**And proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.** Jesus existed from eternity past, long before He appeared on earth (cf. Micah 5:2).

3 John resumes the sentence he began in verse 1. **that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you. We proclaim** suggests that he was passing on to others what he had been given.

**So that you too may have fellowship with us.** The word **fellowship** (*koinonia*) means partnership and occurs four times in 1:3, 6, 7. *Koinonia* refers to the sense of community that is established when people walk in the light of God. According to John, fellowship with God, which is rooted in the message of the Word of life, includes fellowship with one another. It also includes a mutual partnership to proclaim the Word of life.

**And indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.** We cannot know the Father without knowing the Son. We enter into this partnership and communion with everyone who is in Christ. The Christian life is not a life of isolation but an active involvement with other believers. This fellowship has both a horizontal quality and a vertical one.

4 **And we are writing these things.** John gives us four interpretive keys to explain his purpose for writing (see 1:4; 2:1; 2:26; 5:13).

**So that our joy may be complete.** John’s joy is made full by hearing that the believers to whom he is writing are enjoying fellowship with God and one another. **Complete:** literally, “may be having been made full.”

**THIS WEEK’S  
COMPLEMENTARY PASSAGE**

John 1:1-14

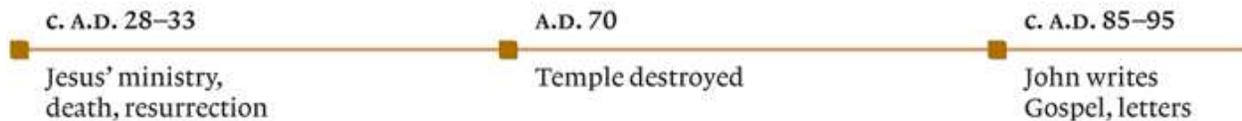
- <sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.  
<sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.  
<sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.  
<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.  
<sup>7</sup> He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.  
<sup>8</sup> He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.  
<sup>9</sup> The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.  
<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

## STEP FOUR . . .

### BACKGROUND

#### Introduction to 1 John

##### Timeline



##### Author, Date, and Recipients

John, the son of Zebedee, probably wrote 1 John and his other two letters no later than the 90s A.D. He wrote from Ephesus (present-day western Turkey), perhaps to churches like those mentioned in Rev. 2:8–3:22. John also wrote the Fourth Gospel and the book of Revelation.



##### Occasion and Purpose

John's readers were confronted with an early form of Gnostic teaching (see Gnosticism below). This heresy was also known for its libertine excess, throwing off all moral restraints.

Consequently, John wrote this letter with two basic purposes in mind: (1) to expose false teachers (see 2:26 and note) and (2) to give believers assurance of salvation (see 5:13). In keeping with his intention to combat Gnostic teachers, John specifically struck at their total lack of morality (3:8–10); and by giving eyewitness testimony to the incarnation, he sought to confirm his readers' belief in the incarnate Christ (1:3). Success in this would give the writer joy (1:4).

## Gnosticism

One of the most dangerous heresies of the first two centuries of the church was Gnosticism. Its central teaching was that spirit is entirely good and matter is entirely evil. From this unbiblical dualism flowed five important errors:

1. The human body, which is matter, is therefore evil. It is to be contrasted with God, who is wholly spirit and therefore good.
2. Salvation is the escape from the body, achieved not by faith in Christ but by special knowledge (the Greek word for “knowledge” is *gnosis*, hence Gnosticism).
3. Christ’s true humanity was denied in two ways: (1) Some said that Christ only seemed to have a body, a view called Docetism, from the Greek *dokeo* (“to seem”), and (2) others said that the divine Christ joined the man Jesus at baptism and left him before he died, a view called Cerinthianism, after its most prominent spokesman, Cerinthus. This view is the background of much of 1 John (see 1:1; 2:22; 4:2–3).
4. Since the body was considered evil, it was to be treated harshly. This ascetic form of Gnosticism is the background of part of the letter to the Colossians (see Col 2:21,23).
5. Paradoxically, this dualism also led to licentiousness. The reasoning was that, since matter—and not the breaking of God’s law (see 3:4)—was considered evil, breaking his law was of no moral consequence.

## STEP FIVE . . .

### EXPLORING the passage through discussion

#### Questions

1. What does John tell you about himself in his prologue? Why do you think he doesn’t name himself as the writer? What is his authority for proclaiming Christ?
2. In light of the paragraph on Gnosticism (see previous section) why would John write so much about what we “know”?
3. Based on John’s prologue alone, what was at stake as he wrote his letter to the churches?
4. Why is it important that Jesus Christ is both fully divine and fully human? Why should that be significant to us?
5. How confident are you in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus? How do these opening verses reinforce your confidence?
6. Why did John say he was proclaiming this message (1:3)? How does the concept strike you? What does fellowship with God the Father and God the Son look like?

7. How can we best express the fellowship that the gospel creates? What would it look like if we truly loved one another? What would need to change so that we could love one another?
  
8. Since true joy is not dependent upon outward circumstances, how do we experience it? How is deep-rooted joy connected to the vertical and horizontal dimensions of fellowship?

**STEP SIX . . .**

**APPLYING** the passage to my life  
*Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the Word but doers ~ James 1:22*

You're encouraged to journal your answers to the following questions in order to apply what you've learned this week.

1. How is God making Himself known to you?
  
2. What is going on beneath the surface of your life that Jesus is trying to change?
  
3. How is God calling you to serve your family, community, and world?

**10 CORE PRACTICES OF A DISCIPLE**

**Undiluted Worship** *Matthew 22:37-40*

Loving the Lord God with all of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual vigor and, my neighbor as myself.

**Constant Abiding** *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

**Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

Reading the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for daily life.

**Desperate Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

Praying to God to know Him, laying requests before Him and, finding direction for daily life.

**Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

**Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

Using my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

**Total Forgiveness** *Ephesians 4:30*

Practicing forgiving others as God has forgiven me in Christ.

**Tangible Compassion** *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

**Generous Giving** *2 Corinthians 8:7*

Giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

**God Space** *Ephesians 6:19-20*

Increasing the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

Sermon Notes:

2018: BOOK-AT-A-TIME ONE YEAR BIBLE READING PLAN  
(on LCC website)

Sunday, October 21 thru Saturday, October 27, 2018  
1 Peter 1-3, Isaiah 33; 1 Peter 4-5, Isaiah 34;  
Ezekiel 1-4, Isaiah 35; Ezekiel 5-7, Isaiah 36;  
Ezekiel 8-11, Isaiah 37; Ezekiel 12-14, Isaiah 38

**Memory Verse**

**<sup>4</sup> And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.**

**1 John 1:4**