

THE BOOK OF FIRST JOHN

GBC EQUIPPING HOUR | JANUARY 10, 2021



Authentic Christian Fellowship – 1 John 1:1-4

PURPOSE: To know how to make the church sustainable for future generations with *orthodox* agape love.

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—² 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—³ 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.⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

- 1 John 1:1-4

I. **Authenticity**

A. The World's Take on "Authenticity"

Humanistic psychologists would say that by definition, authentic people possess a number of common characteristics that show they are psychologically mature and fully functioning as human beings. They...

- Have realistic perceptions of reality.
- Are accepting of themselves and of other people.
- Are thoughtful.
- Have a non-hostile sense of humor.
- Are able to express their emotions freely and clearly.
- Are open to learning from their mistakes.
- Understand their motivations.

(Source: *Psychology Today*, Stephen Joseph, Ph.D., posted on internet 8-29-2016).

B. The Biblical Take on “Authenticity”

The word “authentic” is not found in the Bible. But proceeding from *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, we see the word means “**of undisputed origin; genuine... reliable or trustworthy.**” By this definition, also looking back at 1 John 1:1-4, the Bible puts the spotlight on Jesus Christ is the epitome of authenticity. His origins are undisputed by the biblical accounts in the opening of *Matthew* and *Luke*. His works and words caused people to stand off in amazement (Matthew 7:28-29) and have stood the test of time in both the oral and written tradition.

Just as Jesus was the embodiment of trustworthy “truth” (John 14:6), so the church today stands in light of his testimony as a trustworthy “pillar of truth” (1 Timothy 3:15) –and with resounding global impacts (Acts 17:6).

II. **What Makes Christian Fellowship Possible in the First Place**

A. The Historical Reality of Jesus’ Witness

Revisiting the truthfulness of Jesus’ incarnation may seem pedantic at first blush. Why do we need to go over something we learned from children’s Sunday School?

Here’s something to consider: America as a whole is increasingly non-Christian and very open to alternative ways of thinking. And churches in America are not immune. The *State of Theology* survey by *Ligonier Ministries* in 2020 has revealed that as many as thirty percent of “evangelicals” would agree with the statement that “Jesus was a good teacher, but he was not God.” It gets worse. The same survey found that sixty-two percent of “evangelicals” would agree with the statement, “Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God” (contrary to what Jesus said in John 8:58 and 10:30).

Be on the lookout for new flashy styles of doing church without a statement of faith that is routinely reviewed and affirmed by congregants. The opening of *First John* is, in essence, a confession of faith; **it's bedrock material.**

B. The Congregational Anointing by the Holy Spirit

Reading 1 John 1:3-4, how is it that an eyewitness of Jesus' life ministry can all the sudden expect a faraway people who have never personally met Jesus to resonate with the eyewitness's joyful memories? Humanly speaking this doesn't make sense.

The answer is found in the continued reading of 1 John where in chapter 2, verse 20 it says, "But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge." This is extremely intriguing and illuminating for two reasons:

1. It reveals that the "fellowship" the Apostle John is reaching for is made possible through the supernatural means of the Holy Spirit first opening a person's heart to saving faith in Jesus Christ (see Acts 16:14).
2. It reveals that the recipients of John's letter were maintaining their faith in Christ while not having ever seen the Savior –only trusting the Christian teachers who came to teach The Way; this is a commendable thing, as John 20:29 testifies.

III. **What This Means for Us**

A. What You Don't Have To Do

Let it be said: You don't have to be super trendy or talented or witty to make authentic Christian fellowship happen.

B. What You Do Have To Do

Simply guard the truths about Jesus Christ which have been entrusted to you. God through the Holy Spirit will do the rest (Philippians 4:7, 1 Timothy 6:20). Be content to simply “contend for the faith” (Jude 3).

The Book of First John Course Outline:

- January 3 - Introduction
- January 10 - Authentic Christian Fellowship / 1 John 1:1-4
- January 17 - The Confession & The Walk / 1 John 1:5-2:2
- January 24 - Triumph of Light over Darkness / 1 John 2:3-11
- January 31 - Rallying the Troops / 1 John 2:12-17
- February 7 - The Congregational Anointing / 1 John 2:18-27
- February 14 - Know Your Roots / 1 John 2:28-3:10
- February 21 - Practical Agape Love / 1 John 3:11-24
- February 28 - Spiritual Discernment / 1 John 4:1-6
- March 7 - Perfected Agape Love / 1 John 4:7-5:4
- March 14 - Orthodox Christology / 1 John 5:5-12
- March 21 - Peace (and War) unto Eternity / 1 John 5:13-21
- March 28 - Conclusion