

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



COFFEEHOUSE FIVE CHURCH
1 JOHN: THE FATHER HEART OF GOD
THE INCARNATE WORD
1 JOHN 1:1-4
01/08/2017

MAIN POINT

Belief in Jesus, being fully God who became a man, gives assurance of our destiny, fellowship with other believers, and joy.

INTRODUCTION

1. What, according to John, was from the beginning?
2. What was “made manifest” and to whom was it manifested?
3. List the ways John has experienced “the word of life.”
4. What does the author “proclaim” and “testify” about?
5. Who is John’s fellowship with?
6. How will the apostle’s joy be completed?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN

1. Read John 1:1–5. In light of this, what could the author mean by “the word of life” of 1 John 1:1–4? What attributes of Jesus are revealed in 1 John 1:1–4?
2. What is the “beginning” to which the author refers? Read John 1:1–2, 8:58; Colossians 1:15–18; 1 John 2:13; and Revelation 17:18. The Greek word for “made manifest” is *phaner*, which is defined as “to cause to become visible, to cause to become known... [this includes] both sensory and cognitive connotations.”¹ Twice John uses this word. What point is he trying to make? Why is this important? See Philippians 2:5–7; John 17:6–8; 1 Timothy 3:16; and 1 Peter 1:20.

3. The apostle proclaims that which was from the beginning has been made manifest. What is “the beginning”? Read Colossians 1:20, 2:9, and Philippians 2:6–7.

4. Why does John “proclaim” and “testify” about his experience with Christ? Read 1 John 1:5, 4:14, 5:9–10, and Acts 4:19–20.

5. Fellowship is one of the ultimate purposes of John’s letter. How can the Church gain fellowship and love one another? Read John 17:20–21; 1 Corinthians 1:9; Philippians 1:5, 2:1; and 1 John 1:7.

6. The apostle also writes, “so that our joy may be complete.” What joy is he looking toward? How can “joy” be completed? Read John 15:11, 16:24, 17:13; Philippians 2:2; Cf. Luke 15:10; Philippians 1:25; and Psalm 16:11.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME

1. In her commentary on 1 John, Karen Jobes writes, “John wishes to point to the Word who is eternal Life as the grounds for assurance about eternal life.” How does the reassurance of eternal life change your daily life? See Romans 15:13 and Titus 1:2.

2. In the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to himself as the life (John 11:25, 14:6). The promise of life in Christ isn’t just a future eternal life, but it has implications for right now. How does the Word of life change the nature of your daily life?

3. The incarnation’s awesome power is the God of all glory become flesh. In what ways do you ascribe glory to God? In what ways do you seek to ascribe glory to yourself?

4. Martin Luther described his reaction to the incarnation this way: “When I am told that God became man, I can follow the idea, but I just do not understand what it means. For what man, if left to his natural promptings, if he were God, would humble himself to lie in the feedbox of a donkey or to hang upon a cross?”³ What have you learned about the character of God through the incarnation? How has Jesus’ earthly life and death changed your position before God? Read 2 Corinthians 8:9, Ephesians 2:1–10, and Jude 24.

5. The apostle John cannot help but proclaim and testify about his experience with the living God in the flesh, even decades later when he was an old man. How do you proclaim the work of Jesus in your life?

6. In John 17:21, Jesus prayed that those who believe in him would have the same unity of fellowship that he has with the Father. What does fellowship with God look like? What about fellow believers?

7. Robert Candlish describes earthly joy as being “dependent upon outward circumstances, and has no deep root in the soul itself.” Where do you seek joy? When have you experienced joy through fellowship with God?

CONCLUSION

Discuss what you can do as a group to serve our community. Pray together that all members of your group would experience the assurance, fellowship and joy of knowing Jesus.

COMMENTARY

1 JOHN 1:1-4

In the Gospel of John, Jesus declared to a crowd, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). At this, the crowd began throwing stones at him. By uttering the phrase “I am,” Jesus was putting himself on equal footing with God (a.k.a., the great “I Am”), and this was blasphemy—a crime punishable by death (Lev. 24:16).

When our first parents sinned in the garden, they “hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God” (Gen. 3:8). After this initial sin, humanity was forced apart from God. The Old Testament paints a clear picture of a fence around God’s name and glory; in Exodus 33:20, God tells Moses, “You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” In Deuteronomy, after receiving the Ten Commandments, the people ask Moses to hear from God on their behalf, out of fear of his glory, saying, “This day we have seen God speak with man, and man still live.... If we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of fire as we have, and has still lived?” (Deut. 5:24–26).

Yet this God, whom no one could look on and live, became flesh. Philippians 2:6–7 says Jesus, who is God, “emptied himself... being born in the likeness of men.” To the Jews of Jesus’ day, this was unbelievable. That the God of all glory would save his people in such a humble way was beyond comprehension (Isa. 53:3; Matt. 13:53–58; John 1:10–11). Not only did God become flesh, but he chose eyewitnesses to this amazing salvation story.

The book of 1 John opens with the exclamations of an eyewitness to the incredible event of the incarnation, God come in flesh. The author of this letter was able to do what no human had done—stand in the presence of God and live. He describes this in John 1:14, “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.” The incarnation restores fellowship, for “no one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (John 1:18). And the joy of the presence of God is the ultimate restoration (1 John 1:4).