



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

John Knew Jesus. Do We? (1 John 1:1-4)

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After missing the 2013 session due to physical issues, I am grateful to be back in Annapolis to meet with those in the capitol community for Bible study and prayer. Beginning in 2014, I am also hopeful that my wife, Tracy, will be able to come with me most days. If you haven't met her, I know you will love her!

Our meeting time is each Thursday of the session at 8:00 a.m. in Room 153 in the House Office Building. Legislators and staff are welcome to attend and if you have any questions, just call or write me. My contact information is in the heading. If you are unable to make it to our meeting time, I will send these notes each week for you to read as you have time.

For this year, I'd like for us to think about the truths in the small letter of 1 John. It's packed with important teaching for all of us to understand. It's my prayer that you will give priority time to your spiritual life. These Bible studies are designed to help with that during these busy days of the session. God bless you and thank you for serving Maryland as God's servants to the state (Romans 13:6).

I. KNOWING CHRIST IS PERSONAL (1:1)

1 John 1:1 - 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

John begins his first epistle the same way he started his gospel: referring to Jesus, the Word.

John 1:1, 14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 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.

Here was a simple Jewish fisherman whose life had been transformed by a relationship, by meeting someone who completely changed him. He saw Jesus, heard His teaching, observed His miracles, hugged Him, and ate with Him. John lived his daily life with Christ for about three years and he leans heavily on this eyewitness testimony to prove to his readers that what he says is true.

That was his main reason for writing. He wanted people to read this message and know who Jesus is from the account of an apostle, or one who was with Jesus. That was his purpose for his gospel as well as this letter.

John 20:30, 31 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.

1 John 5:13 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.

This is a personal matter. Knowing Christ was personal for John and he knew that was important to give that same confidence of knowing to his readers. And the same is true for us. At the end of life, with all of our work and accomplishments and success to point to, the only question that really will matter will be "What did you do with Jesus?"

Pete Seeger died recently at the age of 94, a longer life than most of us will have. His folk music and political activism made him a famous voice in America for decades. Whether you agree with his politics or not, he did some good for this world. But Pete Seeger will stand before the Lord and give an account of his life. I have no idea what he believed, but God will be the final judge of his soul and his destiny. What I do know is that God's judgment will come down to whether or not Pete believed in Christ as the Son of God. Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) It's a personal decision each individual must make.

II. KNOWING CHRIST BRINGS CONFIDENCE (1:2)

1 John 1:2 - 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—

John continues his thought from verse one, emphasizing the fact that what he is saying is true, the result of his own experiences which came directly from God the Father and are worthy of acceptance. We already considered the importance of the word "know" for John. In this verse, we have the word "manifest" used twice which underscores that Christ was revealed in a tangible way, so that John's eyewitness testimony is trustworthy. This should bring confidence.

So why don't more people believe what John (and Peter, Matthew, Paul, Luke and others) wrote? How do we know that what we have is the truth? We weren't there. All that is written may not have historical proof from multiple sources. What makes John's words trustworthy?

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As legislators, you hear many people testify about many things. We have courts in which testimony is given to prove a case. The nature of the testimony is crucial. One of the reasons we can have confidence in our faith in Christ is the veracity of the witnesses to His work here on earth.

John, when he made this proclamation about who Jesus is and what He did, was lying or was crazy or was giving rock-solid first-hand testimony to what he knew to be true. We can depend on that. The power of the worldwide movement of the Gospel began with just a few people Jesus had entrusted with His message. I just don't think a group of liars would have gotten that far.

When John writes, we can have confidence that what he is saying is true. No, we weren't there, but plenty of evidence backs up John's claims about Christ. His writings are included in the Scriptures and we can be sure of this witness.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17 - All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

III. KNOWING CHRIST CAUSES FELLOWSHIP (1:3)

1 John 1:3 - 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.

We'll see this word "fellowship" again next week, but we should keep in mind what a strong, powerful word it is. This is not some passing association that can be thrown off easily. The Greek word "koinonia" means you become a part of someone else, joined together with a common goal and purpose. In this verse John says we not only have that kind of relationship with one another, but the intimacy is also with the Father and Jesus Himself.

I have been on missions trips to other countries where there is an undeniable connection with fellow believers. Knowing Christ is like that. It's like family even though you've just met. This is partnership that cannot be manipulated or created by human will. Jesus unites His followers.

You can tell who a person fellowships with. There is an account in the book of Acts that shows that the Jewish leaders who watched John (and Peter) could tell with whom they were partners.

Acts 4:13 - Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Those who are bonded together by faith in Christ have true fellowship with God and one another. It can't be hidden.

IV. KNOWING CHRIST PRODUCES JOY (1:4)

1 John 1:4 - And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

Some translations say "that your joy may be complete", but if our fellowship with each other is close, there will be joy all around. How sad it is that for some, the stereotypical Christian is sullen, somber or just angry.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, a Supreme Court justice for 30 years, told this to a friend about his career choice: "I might have entered the ministry if certain clergymen I knew had not looked and acted so much like undertakers."

No one should enjoy life here on earth more than one who is in fellowship with God. Charles Spurgeon once said in a sermon

I am persuaded there are more delights in Christ; yea, more joy in one glimpse of his face than is to be found in all the praises of this harlot-world, and in all the delights which it can yield to us in its sunniest and brightest days.

John will build his case through this letter that this most important of relationships is the only one that can produce true joy. He will discuss light, forgiveness, victory over sin, love, discernment, and the hope of eternal life. These are the components that give joy to the human heart.

John's experiences with Jesus were first-hand, but we can know Him as well and read through this letter with confidence that we have the truth. The most important question is do you know Jesus and see the evidence in your life?

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