



1 JOHN 1:1-4

Part 1 of Epistles of John

Pastor Mark Driscoll | 1 John 1:1-4 | June 20, 2004

You may be seated. Good morning. And Happy Father's Day to all the dads and the granddads. We're gonna go through 1 John today. It's typical for us as a church just to go right through Books of the Bible. We're starting a new Book today in honor of Father's Day. We'll start 1 John, and we'll be in the first four verses of the very first chapter, and the sermon will be in two parts. I'm gonna do a recap of the Life of Jesus, and then we'll launch in 1 John. The theme of 1 John is Jesus, so we have to set up Jesus, who is John's very dearest friend. So, I'll pray for our time together while you guys find that section in your Bible and then we'll get into it, and then you can go work on your sunburn. Good to see you. Any dad's golfing today? Do something nice for your dad today. Let him go golfing. Buy him something with carbohydrates. Do something nice for dad, something wild and crazy.

Father God, we love you. We thank you for an opportunity to study together, to be together. I thank you that, Father, you are a Father to us, and that – for those of us who don't have fathers, you are a Father to the fatherless. I thank you that you are our Heavenly Father and we are your earthly children; sons and daughters loved and adopted into the family of God, through the work of Jesus. God, as we gather together today to study the Scriptures. As always, it's our prayer that you would inform us and instruct us and convict us and encourage us according to each of our particular needs that you know best and well. Holy Spirit, we ask that you would do your work of informing us as to what the Scriptures have for us today, opening our eyes to Jesus, opening our hearts to love him. And Jesus, we pray that you will do your good work of reconciling us back to God, who is our Father. We love you. And God, we seek you today and we seek your face in Jesus' good name. Amen.

As we get into 1 John, I'm gonna set it up this way. I'm gonna tell you about Jesus. At Mars Hill, we're about Jesus. Not just God in general. We believe in God; his name is Jesus. So, we love Jesus. We preach Jesus. We serve Jesus. We adore Jesus. We follow Jesus. Our whole goal is at the end to be with Jesus. We're about Jesus. And as we get into 1 John, it's very important to know that, because John is a pastor who, at this stage in his life, is writing to a church that worships Jesus. John, you're going to see, is a man who lived his life with Jesus. He was Jesus' dearest and closest friend. It is arguable that no one has ever loved Jesus as much as John. And the reason I say that is because through the course of his life, he's the one that is spoken of. He is called The One Whom Jesus Loved. Jesus loved John. John loved Jesus. And at the Cross, Jesus, when he was being crucified, looked down and saw John, the author of this great letter, standing next to his mother, Mary. And Jesus asked John to care for and to look after his mother Mary. And from that, we can definitely see that they were the dearest of friends. At the moment of your death, the person that you appoint to look after your dear mother, that's your dearest friend. And that's John. That's the author of this great letter.

What happened was John began as a young man with Jesus as friends. And he's now, at the time of writing this Book, he's an old man at the end of his life. And what had happened was the church had grown quite a bit. There were a number of Christians. But those Christians were now in the second and third generation. Most of them were young like most of us. And they were not present for the words of Jesus and the works of Jesus, but John was. So, what John is going to do, is he's going to tell them his life story. Literally, 1 John is like Bible studies with Grandpa Pastor John. That's what it is. He keeps saying throughout the book, "My dear little children." In the Greek text it's "My little born again ones." This is grandpa writing to his spiritual grandchildren; people in their teens, '20s, and early '30s. He's an older man, probably in his '90s. He's been around for a while. And as the church has grown, false teachers have crept into the church. Through the letter of 1 John, he'll call them "Deceivers, anti-Christ, and false teachers." Lovely, endearing terms that he gives them that we'll study as we go through the Book.

And what he teaches the new Christians, and the young Christians, is that he's going to die, and he doesn't want the truth to die with him. He wants them to keep their eyes on Jesus, and to keep their hearts towards Jesus. And not get distracted by all the silly arguments and the false teachers. Because other religions and perspectives and views and opinions were creeping in, and getting very faddish, hitting Oprah, you know, getting book deals. All that kind of stuff was going on, and he's trying to make sure that they stick real close to Jesus and keep an eye on him.

So, what I wanted to do is I want to really start by informing you about Jesus. I can't presume that we all know who Jesus is, or we all know why we worship him as God, or why we should. So, I want to hit nine reasons, why we as a church, worship Jesus – nine reasons why John, the author of this Book, worships Jesus, as God, and I want to give you a compelling case for Jesus. And then we'll look at what John has to say about his witness to these facts. And what I'm gonna do, is I'm going to – I'm gonna give you nine reasons that are from the words of Jesus himself.

The reason being, that many people have an opinion or a perspective on Jesus. It's good to hear directly from him, okay. I remember when I was in high school, I took a Bible as literature class. When I was in college, I took a World Religions class. And as a non-Christian on both accounts at that time – I had not yet become a Christian – what I was told was that all religions are basically the same. That all religious teachers basically teach the same thing, and that all religions are different paths to the same eternity. And then, I read the Bible and was really confused, because it didn't say any of that.

In fact, it said diametrically the opposite. It said exactly the opposite.

And as I read the words of Jesus, he didn't sound like any other religious leader or teacher. I'd looked at parts of the Koran. I'd looked at parts of the Vedas Scriptures. I'd looked at parts of Taoism and Confucianism, and I had looked at traditional Judaism, and spent some time looking at Hinduism and Buddhism and philosophies of reincarnation, and looked at philosophy, and was sort of reading broadly and thinking. And then I read Jesus, and I thought to myself, "Well, this guy doesn't sound like anybody else. I don't know. The Professors must not have gotten to his words. They must only be reading books written by people who have perspectives about him, but they haven't heard directly from him."

And so, today I want to sort of clear some of that landscape for you, and I just want you to hear from Jesus nine reasons why he's God, and why that's trustworthy and true. And then we'll listen to what John, the eyewitness to these facts, has to say.

The first reason we worship Jesus, is 'cause he said he was God. Now, you don't worship anybody unless they say they're God. And you got to start with the main thing. "Are you God?" "Nope." "Well, I guess you're not." Right? I mean, you got to start with the basics. The basic is that Jesus said he was God. Jesus said he was God. He says in John Chapter 10, "I and Father are one. And again, the Jews picked up stones to stone him." Okay, that's for blasphemy. Jesus is claiming to be God, and they know it, so they're going to kill him. Ultimately, they do kill him for claiming to be God. But, Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." Jesus said he was God. Everyone understood that he said he was God, okay.

This is very important, because it might surprise you to know that through the history of the world, very few people have ever claim to be God. A very small number of people. Most of them are nuts. Very few credible people have ever said they were God, okay. Now, what happens is, that there are religions founded by – well Buddhism by Buddha, or Confucianism by Confucius, or Islam by Mohammed, or you'll get great Hindu teachers, like Gandhi. You will get in every religion founders, and then you will get teachers in those religious streams. But the curious thing is that Christianity is the only religion that is founded by someone who claims to be God. Everyone else claims to be a servant of God, or a prophet of God, or a pointer to God, or a spokesman for God, but no one claims to be God. They just don't. They just simply don't.

Very rarely has anyone claimed to be God. And occasionally, if someone who is a good religious leader dies, perhaps generations later they may venerate that person and begin to worship them as God. But, that person themselves has never claimed to be God. Mohammed, Krishna, Buddha, Gandhi – you name it – never claimed to be God. Jesus did. This distinguishes him from all of the religious teachers. Those people that are here today, and may think that all religions are the same or quite similar, Jesus is totally different. We're not talking about religions. We're talking about Jesus. And he's different than everyone else, because he says he's God. He elevates himself as superior to them by declaring himself to be God.

A second reason that Jesus is God and we worship him as such is that he says that he came down from Heaven. He says, "I came from the Father," – in 1 John 16:28 – "and entered the world; now I'm leaving the world and going back to my Father." What Jesus says, is Heaven is mine – home-sweet-home – that's where I'm from. I came down into human history here on the Earth as a man, and when I finish my ministry, I will return back into Heaven. That's curious, because throughout the history of the world, everyone else claims to be from the Earth. They don't claim to be from Heaven. Occasionally, someone will say that they got to peak into Heaven. They'll say, "I had a near-death experience and I saw the light and I looked into Heaven for just a second." Whether or not they do, we don't know. But, at the very most, that's what kind of report that we get; a brief glimpse into Heaven.

The prophet, Muhammad, the founder of Islam, he claimed that on one occasion in his life he got to peak into Heaven, but that's it. Just one occasion. All religious teachers, spiritual leaders, people who write books, people that are popular in our present day; they will tell you that they are not from Heaven. That they are from the Earth – they were born here – that they had their origin and beginning here. And they're hope is to get a glimpse into Heaven and perhaps, one day, to actually go to Heaven. That's their hope that they aspire to. But Jesus is distinct, different, and superior, because he came from Heaven. Heaven belongs to him. That's why if you want to get to Heaven, you got to follow Jesus. He's from there. He came here and he went back. And so if you want to go there, you need to follow him. He's the only one who's ever been from there. He's the only one who knows how to return to there.

Third reason we worship Jesus, as God, is that he said he was sinless. In John 8:46, he says, "Can any of you prove my guilty of sin?" He asks the question, "What sin have I committed? Bring a charge. I'm sinless. 'If I am telling the truth – then – why don't you believe me?'" He's telling the truth; that's he's sinless. Now, how many of you can make this claim? You raise your hand and your wife ribs you, you know. You can't. We're all sinners. We sin by omission; we don't do what we're supposed to do. We sin by commission; we do what we're not supposed to do. We sin in our motives; we do the right thing for the wrong reason. We sin in our attitudes, our actions, our thoughts, our lust, our desires. Aren't you glad there's not a computer monitor hooked up to your mind, walking around relaying all of your hidden thoughts. You know, we hope it never gets there, 'cause no one will ever want to be with us.

We know that we're sinners, and even the very best of us knows that we're sinners. It's interesting, you know, when you think of the Holiest people that ever lived, most people would put somewhere on the list, a guy like Gandhi, right? A selfless man committed to peace. Gandhi, in his life, confessed that he was a sinner. Muhammad, who is the founder of Islam – it's very interesting, because the Muslims will tell you that there are a succession of prophets that have come onto the stage of history. And that the final and greatest prophet was Muhammad, who came about 570 A.D. – came some 500 plus years after Jesus – and they will say that he is superior to Jesus. But, they have one big problem. Muhammad said he was a sinner and Jesus said he wasn't. And so Jesus is superior to Muhammad. That's why I don't understand why a devout Muslim would follow Muhammad when he's sinful. A sinner can be wrong, and he is.

And Jesus claims to be sinless, and thereby superior and more trustworthy and believable and true. And because he's sinless, he doesn't make mistakes and errors as a sinner would, especially in his instruction and his teaching. Religious leaders never make this claim. Spiritual people never make this claim. People don't make the claim that they are sinless, because someone will take them up on the challenge, right. If I told you "I am without sin," you would prove me wrong just for sport, and you should. And it would take you about 30 seconds to find someone in this room who would tell some terrible tale that is true, and then I would be guilty as charged, because I'm a sinner. We're all sinners. Everyone's a sinner. And everyone claims to be a sinner. Everyone acknowledges they're a sinner, except for Jesus. He says he's without sin. Very, very, very unusual. No one has been able to make that claim with any credibility. And no religious leader, no religious teacher, or no religious founder has been able to make that claim.

Fourth reason we worship Jesus as God is that he forgives sins. This is amazing. Sin is our problem. We only truly have one problem, that's the sin problem. That's the cause for all of the other affects. Death and disaster and mayhem and bitterness and hatred and anxiety and depression; every problem comes out of the sin problem, literally. If we didn't have the sin problem, we wouldn't have homelessness and poverty and war. We wouldn't have any problems. There is one cause for all of the affects that we see in the world, and that's the sin problem. People struggle mightily trying to figure out what to do with sin. Some of you have sinned, and you have a guilty conscience. You feel burden, convicted. You want to know what to do with your sin. Others of you have been sinned against, and you feel violated and angry and bitter. You don't know what to do with the sin. We have counselors and therapists and medications and treatment, and our whole culture has an enormous industry trying to deal with sin.

We have police officers. We have jails. We have a judicial system. We have litigation. We have attorneys, laws – all of it is trying to deal with sin. Down to locks our doors and car alarms and dogs that bark and guns, and the whole of it is trying to figure out how to deal with sin. This is our problem. Every problem comes out of the sin problem. And Christianity is the only religion that offers you forgiveness for sin if you've sinned against God. Every other religion will tell you that you need to do something to pay God back; you need to suffer in this life, or maybe you're reincarnate and come back again and again and again and again and again. And any time you commit a bad deed, it goes to an accountant and you got to come back and pay it back and pay it back and pay it back. It's misery. There's no hope in that. You don't make any progress. Here's what Jesus has to say, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Sons, your sins are forgiven.'" Jesus forgave sin.

Here's good news friends, you can have your sins forgiven. You don't need to pay God back. You don't need to work it off. You don't need to reincarnate. You don't need to go to Hell. You don't need to deny your sin. You don't need to manage your sin. You can be forgiven for it. It can be cleansed and taken away. See, Jesus lived without sin, but he died. Now, death is the consequence of sin. It's the wage for sin. When you sin you die. But Jesus died, but he didn't sin. But, he died for my sins. He died for the sins of us. Jesus took my sin on himself. He died in my place, thereby paying the penalty for my sin – which is death – then he give me his life and I get forgiveness, and he gets the Cross. I should have gotten the Cross – but I got forgiveness. And that was his final word from the Cross, "Father, forgive them." As he was dying, he forgave me. I don't need to die and go to Hell. I don't need to accept my sin. I don't need to live in my sin. I don't need to be mastered by my sin. And I certainly don't need to die and reincarnate through multiple eons of life to continually suffer by a capricious God, who painstakingly makes me pay him back for all my sins, when I can't anyways. Because once you have sinned it's already too late, and Jesus forgives me. He forgives sin.

Good luck going into a counselor, a therapist, or a religious leader, and meet them in their office and tell them your sins, and have them say, "I forgive you; you are forgiven." They don't have that authority, because you and I have sinned against God. Only God can forgive us. Now, on the human level, we can forgive each other, but ultimately we've sinned against God, and only God can truly forgive us. Jesus is God, and he forgives us. He forgives us.

The fifth reason that we worship Jesus is, because he said he was the only way to Heaven, and indeed he is. A lot of people will tell you, "Well, there's a lot of paths to Heaven. There's a lot of ways." A lot of religious leaders will say, "Well, there's a path over here, and if you follow my instruction you'll find it. Find the path." Jesus says, "I am that path. I'm the only path, in fact." Jesus said to her in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." Jesus says, "If you believe in me you'll die, but you'll live with me forever." Jesus says elsewhere, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, but by me." Jesus does not say, "There are lots of religions, pick one that works for you." Jesus doesn't say, "There's lots of Gods. There's lots of paths. There's lots of opinions. There's lots of perspectives."

Some of you think that Christians are narrow, and we are, because Jesus was. They killed him because he was narrow, and we simply are following in his legacy and example. Not to be demeaning to other religions or other religious leaders or other belief structures, but simply to say, "To be a Christian, we must be faithful to Christ." And Jesus teaches that apart from him, there is no salvation. Apart from him, there is no path to Heaven. The best that another religious leader or spiritual teacher will do is they will stand at a distance and they will point to a path, and they will tell you to tread upon it. Jesus tells you that he, in fact, is that path.

The sixth reason that we worship Jesus as God is that he confirmed to others that he was God. Now, some of you may have heard my first point in stating that Jesus declared that he was God. And some of you may say, "Well, maybe that's what people thought. But, that's not really what he said." Or maybe they misunderstood him. People in Jesus' day thought that same thing. They thought to themselves, "You know, it sounds like he just said he was God. He couldn't have said that. That's blasphemy. Go double check." That's exactly what happens in this occurrence in Matthew 26, "But Jesus remained silent." and "The high priest said to him, 'I charge you under oath by the living God.' Okay? 'Do you swear to God to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you Jesus?'" Right? That's what they asked him. He's testifying to tell the truth before himself, "Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God?" That's the Old Testament name for the Messiah, is Christ, and the Son of God, that's the title for God, in human flesh. "Are you a man, who's God?" that's what they're asking you. "Are you the God man?" "Yes. It is as you say."

"It is as you say." Jesus replied, "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man – you will see me – sitting on the right hand of the

Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven – oh, I'm gonna go back to Heaven, and I'm gonna sit on a throne. And then I'm gonna come back and I'm gonna judge you." "Oh, he definitely thinks he's God." "Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy.' This guy says he's God." Jesus said he was God, people came to him and said, "Are you sure that's what you meant to say?" And he said, "I'm positive. I'm God. That's exactly what I said, and that's exactly what I meant." He died for that fact. Jesus declared he was God, and when it was brought in question he confirmed it, okay.

At this point, don't worry about everybody else's opinion or perspective, come down to this; Jesus said he was God. Do you believe that? Yes or no? Really, you've got to come down and you got to be able to answer that question for yourself. Either he is telling you the truth, or he's not. It's real simple. I'm God. That's what Jesus says. They killed him for that fact. Now, do you think that if he wasn't God that he would have recounted before his execution? Probably. Probably. When it came to the point where all his friends had betrayed him, he was homeless, flat broke, no wife, no kids, no book deal, no fame, no love, no affection, no wealth – Judas betrayed him with a kiss. Peter, the leader of his disciples, denied him and abandoned him, and there he is getting beaten and flogged and tormented. And all he had to do to avoid the excruciating pain of execution on a cross is simply say, "I recant." And he never did, though he had nothing earthly to gain. He never recanted. And when continually approached by people, he repeatedly confirmed that he, indeed, was God.

The seventh reason that we worship Jesus here is he accepted worship as God. Other people worship Jesus in his life. In Matthew 14:33 it speaks of the occasion where they were out fishing and Jesus walked on the water. And then, he got back in the boat, and "Then those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus, saying truly you are the Son of God." They bowed down and worshiped him when they saw him walk on the water and calm the storms, showing that he had dominion and authority over all of creation. Jesus didn't say, "Oh, you're mistaken. Don't worship me. The Ten Commandments declare that there's only one God and you should worship him alone." Jesus received worship as God from them, and today from us. We worship Jesus as God, because he invited, welcomed, and accepted worship as God.

Some of you may think that he was a moral teacher, a decent man, but if he, in fact, were allowing us to worship him as God, and he knew, in fact, that he was not God, that would make him an awful teacher. In the same way, if you worship me as God, because I am your teacher and I allowed you to do that, and I welcomed you to do that, when I, in fact, was not God, that would not allow me to be a good teacher. That would make me a false teacher. In fact, that would make me a cult leader. And so, you're really left with this issue. Jesus is either a heretical cult leader, or he's God. But, either way he allows people to worship him, either deservedly as God or undeservedly as a cult leader. We worship Jesus as God. They did to, because he is God. He's the only one to be worshiped as God. No one else – no one else.

The eighth reason that we worship Jesus as God is because he performed miracles, and his greatest, obviously, was raising from death. His miracles included feeding upwards of 20,000–25,000 people with a little boys' lunch, walking on water, healing people who were sick. Jesus performed a great number of miracles; he had no problem demonstrating his authority and dominion over creation and nature. But, his greatest miracle was his resurrection. In Mark 8:31, it says that, "Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man," – that's the title for himself, God, who is a man – "Must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again." Jesus repeatedly taught the religious leaders are gonna oppose me, they're gonna kill me, but I'll be back in three days.

He said elsewhere, "Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, so I will be in the earth, and then I'm coming back." Jesus performed miracles. Now, there are people that may tell you that they have spiritual insight, but do they have spiritual power? How many books on the shelf today are written by people who have performed miracles? How many the books that you read for spiritual nourishment or encouragement were written by people who feed the multitudes, healed the sick, bring back the dead, walk on water, calm storms, cast out demons? How many have that kind of authority? Jesus had the words of God and he had the works of God. Spiritual teachers at their very best usually can only muster up a few pithy, supernatural insights, but they cannot back it up with the kind of authority and supernatural power that Jesus did. And it's amazing because Jesus predicted his death. He predicted the mode of his death through betrayal, and then he predicted the day of his resurrection.

The reason that we worship on Sunday, is because that's the day of Jesus' resurrection. That's why we're here today. This is the day that the Lord Jesus rose from death. And he conquered our enemies a sin and death and he took care of our sin problem and our death enemy. That's what he did. And it's just curious because every of the religious leader has said, "Well, there is a path to God," or, "Here is a perspective on God," or, "Here is a way to pay God back." And they're all dead. Every one of them; Krishna, Buddha, Mohammed, Gandhi, whomever you choose, they're all dead. They've all taken their opinion, they have cast their lot, they have worked from speculation, which is men looking up at God, rather than revelation, which is God coming down to man, and they have lost. And they are dead, and Jesus is alive and well. And he is conquered Satan, sin and death. And that makes him true and superior to all others. It goes on.

The ninth reason that we worship Jesus, and this will be my final one, is that he knew the future. And how many of you would love to know the future, right; you bookies, you investment brokers, right. You would love to know the future. You Lotto players. We would love to the future. We don't know the future. We are finite, and we don't know what tomorrow brings. Occasionally, some religious leader will make a guess into the near future. Very rarely is there any sort of projection into the far future. Occasionally someone will hit on maybe a small percentage of their prognostications, but Jesus bats 1,000. Everything he says comes to pass exactly as he promised.

He for example told Peter, when he was – just prior to his crucifixion – he told Peter that Peter was gonna betray him. Jesus answered, "I tell you Peter before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times. You'll say that you don't know me." Peter denied. He said, "No way, Lord Jesus. I love you. I know that, you know, it's a hard day but just because others abandon you – I will never abandon you. I will never walk away. I will never deny you." Jesus says, "Today, three times before the rooster crows, that's what you're going to." He knew the future. He knew the future. He knew at the

Last Supper, that Judas would betray him. He knew that he would die and rise in three days, as we saw in Mark. Jesus knew the future and he repeatedly spoke of the future, and exactly what he promised has come to pass, which proves to us that he rules over all of creation; he also rules over all of history. His miracles demonstrate his authority over creation. His prophecy prove his authority over history. It's amazing isn't it? No one has ever made these claims. No one has ever backed them up. Jesus is superior to all other options.

Guys, there are so many things that we can disagree about. There's so many things that we can argue about, but anyone who names the name of Christian and is in this room, we all agree on these things. A lot of people say, "Christians don't agree." Yes we do. We agree on what matters most. Secondary issues we'll discuss graciously if you differ with us on a few things. We love you. If you love Jesus, we'll agree to disagree agreeably. But this is the center of the Christian faith. This is the center of the life of the Lord Jesus. This is the sum total of sound doctrine, and this is the heartbeat of the whole Scripture. This is the most important thing. Jesus. And the reason I tell this to you is because you're gonna get into this letter with me on 1 John. John's an old Pastor at the end of his life. The Church at this point was primarily filled with young people, like you. Most of your quite young.

The church would gather together and they would bring out the old Pastor, Grandpa John, because he was too old to climb onto the platform by himself, and they would sit them down and she would tell Jesus stories. Wouldn't you have loved to have been there? The people who had only been around 15, 20, 30 years had never seen Jesus' works. They'd never heard Jesus' words. They weren't there. So, they bring in John, the eyewitness, and they'd say, "John, you were there. We were reading Luke in where Jesus did this. What was that like? We were reading in Matthew where he preached this Sermon. What was that like?" And they would ask Grandpa Pastor John questions about Jesus, and John would sit there, and he would answer their questions, and he would love them. And at the end of his Sermons, he would always close saying, "You are the children of God, love one another. Love one another."

And John was now at the end of his life where he'd been telling Pastor Grandpa John stories for a long time, and he was almost dead, he was just down to the end of his life. And false teachers had climbed into the church – people that were younger than him and were gonna outlive him. They were saying, "Well, there's other religions. There's other perspectives. There's other opportunities to worship God. There's other ways to God. There's other spiritual teachers, and leaders. There's books other than the Bible. You can't be so narrow-minded. You got to keep your options and your perspectives open." John writes 1 John to say, "No, guys, stick with Jesus. Don't lose sight of Jesus. Don't lose love for Jesus. Don't take your mind off of Jesus." And he writes 1 John as a series of Pastor Grandpa John stories, so that you and I, as the new generation of the children of God, could continue to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus as well.

And John begins by stating to us the reasons why we should listen to him, and we should trust him. And I know many of you are skeptical of authority and people, and telling me what to do, and – listen to John. Just give him a hearing. He is a guy who didn't start off as a pastor. Some of you say, "Well, he's a pastor of court." No. He started out as just a guy who met Jesus, and was present for everything in Jesus' life. Jesus chose 12 disciples; he chose three that were in the inner-circle, Peter and James and John. John was there three years; breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Teaching, preaching, miracles, healings; he was there for the whole thing. That's exactly what he says. In 1 John, he goes back and he tells us why we should listen to him about his dear friend Jesus, "That which was from the beginning," it echoes Genesis 1. The beginning there is the beginning of Jesus' ministry. John was one of the first disciples called. John was there for the first miracle. John was there for the first sermon. John was there for special occasions when no one else was privy to be with Jesus. John was there at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, okay.

And he echoes Genesis 1, because history is broken down into two portions of time, creation, and Christ, okay. Our whole Western calendar is built on that; B.C., before Christ, A.D., Anno Domini, the year of our Lord. So, in Genesis 1 it says, "In the beginning God," and then John says here, "And in the second beginning, Jesus." History began with creation, and history began again with Jesus a new beginning, with the beginning of the work of Jesus. And John says, "That which was from the beginning," he says, "Which we have heard," and the "we" is the multitude of witnesses.

Now, this has been some 60 plus years since Jesus has ascended and back – gone back into Heaven. So, at this point, many of the eyewitnesses to the life and death and resurrection of Jesus have died. They're gone. But, there are still some eyewitnesses left. John is one of them. He is part of the "we." Part of that includes the Apostles and those who wrote the Books of the New Testament. But, in addition, there were other people – it says in 1 Corinthians 15, that Jesus appeared after he rose from death to crowds of up to 500 at a time. We also learn in the New Testament that part of this "we" includes his mother and brothers. Did you know Jesus' two brothers went on to be pastors who worshiped him as God? And his own mother, the last picture we have of his Godly mother Mary, is that she is gathered with the other Christians in the early church, in the opening chapters of the Book of Acts, and that her last portrait that we have of her in Scripture, is of her worshiping her son, Jesus, as God. That's the "we."

I'll tell you what, guys, when your mother and brothers worship you as God, you are, right. I mean, my mother has spanked me – not recently, but repeatedly – and my mother loves me. We're very close. She was here at the morning service, but she knows I'm not God, all right. My brothers know I'm not God, right. God wouldn't do that to a brother. But, Jesus' brothers say, "He's God." Jesus' mother says, "He's God." When he says, "Who can accuse me of sin?" His own mother and brother's say, "We have never seen him sin." Your brother has never seen you sin. Now, you mother, maybe she's optimistic, right. She's like, "Oh, he such a good boy. He has good intentions." But, your brother, right, your brother – your two younger brothers? That's part of the "we." Jesus' mother, Jesus' brothers, Jesus' best friend, John. The crowds of up to 500. The thousands upon thousands who were fed by his miracles and those who saw him perform healings, and teach.

He says, "That which was from the beginning, which we," the whole multitude of us, "Have heard, have seen with our eyes, have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life." And the Word of life there is Jesus. If you want to have life, you got to learn to say Jesus. That's the Word of life. Here's the deal, John says, "I saw Jesus with my own eyes. I heard Jesus with my own ears, and I touched Jesus with my own hands. And what I'm telling you is the truth." There is no testimony from antiquity more credible than that of an eyewitness. I can still

remember being in College, before I was a Christian, reading, studying, and I remember reading a lot of critics of Jesus. He really didn't perform miracles, he really didn't say these things, and he really didn't do these things.

And I remember being in a philosophy class with a non-Christian professor, and I said, "I just have a question. The guy that we're reading came about 1,600-1,700 years after Jesus, right?" He said, "Yes," I said, "So how would he know what happened? How would he know what happened better than the guy who was there?" My professor just got a – kind of a puzzled look, and he said, "Well, you know, different people have different opinions," I said, "I know, but wouldn't the person who saw an event have higher credibility than the critic who came over a millennium later, hypothetically?" For example, if you get in a car wreck and 500 people witness it, and they all show up in court. And a guy says, "Your Honor, there was no wreck, and if you give me 1,500 years I got this guy who will write a book proving me right." You would expect to win that day in court. You would say, "If your best case is wait 1,500 years for some white guy from a school to write a book, I win."

Fifteen hundred years after the fact, contradicting eyewitness testimony that was present is absolutely ludicrous. But, guys, that is all that modern scholarship is. That's all that it is. White guys 2,000 years later writing books about things that they didn't see. You're gonna have to decide this. Every person in this room is gonna need to decide this. When it comes to Jesus, whose testimony will you hold as most credible? Will it be an eyewitness, who was Jesus' best friend that had breakfast, lunch, and dinner with him for three years, or someone who came along hundreds, if not thousands, of years after the fact, has no eyewitness testimony, and simply gives a conjectured perspective to criticize eyewitness testimony? That's all that it is. Every religion and philosophy is nothing more than that. That's all that it is.

And you think about it, John saw Jesus every day for three years. All the miracles, he saw them. Not only that, he saw the greatest miracle. Who was the first man at the empty tomb of the Lord Jesus? John. Now, he and Peter ran and he was faster than Peter, and he got to the tomb first. He was the first one to see the empty tomb; him and Peter. He was the one to Jesus risen from death. And not only that, he touched Jesus. When Jesus had risen from death, it was John who embraced his friend. If you don't trust John, who will you trust and why would you trust them more than John? John has nothing to gain. At this point in his life, all the other disciples have been murdered in brutal ways. Paul had been beheaded. Peter had been hung upside down on a Roman Cross. It was just a blood bath. They had tried to kill John. They tried to boil him alive, but he did not die. They exiled him off to the Island of Patmos, which is near modern day Greece, and then he later on returned, after receiving the Book of Revelation. On Sunday, the Lord's Day, he returned back to, probably, Ephesus.

John is not a rich man; he's not a powerful man. In many circles, he's not a highly esteemed man. He's not a man who has an enormous book deal. He's not a man who has tenure at a State University. He's just a guy who met Jesus and won't stop talking about him, because he loves him – because Jesus loves him. Because he saw Jesus perform his miracles. He heard Jesus make all his teachings, and declarations about being God. And he embraced Jesus after he'd risen from death. And he, like Thomas, had an opportunity to investigate the scars of crucifixion on his hands and feet and side. John says, "I was there. I heard. I saw. I touched. This is what I'm telling you about. I'm telling you about Jesus."

He goes on. And the life of Peter, that's Jesus. "We have seen it. We testify to it. We proclaim it to you, the eternal life which was with the Father and has appeared to us." What he says is this, "Jesus is eternal life," some people think that Jesus was a man. He was first God, and then he became a man, "God the eternal God, the Lord Jesus, who was with God the Father in Heaven for eternity, took on human flesh and came into human history as a man," and he appeared to us. The difference between Christianity and other religions of philosophies is this, they are predicated upon speculation, Men and women looking up and guessing, "Who is God? Where is he? What would make him happy? What should we do? How do we get to Heaven? What's our big problem?" Christianity is not predicated upon speculation. Christianity is built upon Revelation. God reveals himself, so we don't have to guess anymore, who's God? Jesus comes – says, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." Okay. I'm God. Okay, now we know who God is, we don't have to speculate.

Jesus tells us that our problem is sin, so now we know what our problem is. We don't have to speculate. Jesus tells us what happens to us after we die, that if we love him, we're with him, and if we don't love him we are separated from him in Hell. Now we know. That mystery has been taken away. Jesus also tells us how we can have life in him, and that is to turn from sin and trust in him. He says, "If you believe in me, though you die, you shall live." Jesus settles it all. He reveals to us God and the way to God, and how we can become friends with God as John was. And that's what John is saying, that the eternal God, Jesus Christ, appeared. We saw him with our own eyes. We heard him with our ears. We touched him with our own hands – trustworthy and true.

And he goes on in Verse 3, he says, "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard," and here's his motivation, "So that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." The word fellowship is basically a pseudonym for friendship; it's basically, what it means. God wants to be friends with us, as he was friends with Jesus. And God – excuse me – as Jesus was friends with John, and God wants us to be friends with one another. He does. God wants people to love each other, and God wants people to love him, because God loves all of us. That's his desire. Here's the problem. Sin. Sin gets between us and God. It creates separation and division. So, we're not friends with God, we're enemies of God. We're not close to God. We're far from God. And sin also gets between people in bitterness and anger and unforgiveness and hostility and disappointment – betrayal. Because of that, people can't be closed and they can be friends because the sin is between them.

Jesus Christ comes. He lives without sin, as God and man, reconciling men and women to God. He dies for sin. 2 Corinthians 5:21, it says, "God made him who knew no sin to become sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." My sin is placed on Jesus. Jesus dies to my place, and then he can forgive and take away my sin. As Jesus takes away my sin, I can be reconciled to God as a Christian and as a friend of God. And now God takes away the sin that has separated you and I. Maybe I sinned against you, or you sinned against me, and God takes a way that sin in Jesus. Now we

can be reconciled as friends. There's a horizontal and vertical dimension to our salvation – friends with God and friends with one another. That's what Jesus said when he said, "The whole point of life is to love God and love each other." That's not possible apart from Jesus.

Jesus tells us what he aspires for us to do and then he enables us to accomplish that by taking away the sin that prevents that from happening. And John says, "I'm telling you these things about Jesus, because I want you to be friends with him as I am, and I want you to be friends with each other." That's what John wants. This is not just a localized church. This is to all churches. This is the only epistle. The only letter in the New Testament, other than Hebrews, that has no general introduction. It doesn't go to a particular person or congregation. It goes out to all of us. John loves Jesus so much that he wants us all to have a friendship with Jesus, where our sins are taken away and we get to be Christians reconciled to God, and we get to be the church reconciled to one another.

And he says in Verse 4, the purpose for writing the letter – as we go through the book, I'll point them out to you. You may want to circle them in your Bible. There's actually four purposes for which the letter was written – that the book instructs us of the intentions of John, the author. And the first purpose here, is he says, "We write this to make our joy complete." Our joy complete. So what would keep you non-Christians from becoming Christians today? What would prevent you from receiving Jesus as God? Your God, who is alive and well and, as he said, coming back to judge the living and the dead. I do not mean to denigrate all of the religious leaders and teachers and philosophers, but the point is simply this. They have guessed as best they could. They have died and are still dead. They were indeed wrong, and you would be foolish to follow in their legacy.

Jesus Christ is alive and well; conquered sin and death, and he alone has claimed to be God. And he alone has demonstrated that – through his words and his works – he alone is the one in whom your faith should be placed and your eternity should be secured. What would prevent you from following Jesus? What would prevent you from being friends with Jesus, as John was? You're saying, "My sins are too great." He has died for sin. He can forgive all and any sin, and he can love anyone. Those of us who are Christians, we would testify to that fact readily wholeheartedly and happily.

Response: Amen.

Your sins are no worse than ours and they are no deeper or darker, and God's love is deeper still. What would prevent you from receiving Jesus? There is no reason. Don't think that you need to examine every other religion. I've told you the basics of what you truly need to know. And that is that it comes down to Jesus or someone that you will trust more than him. And if you'll trust someone more than him, my question you would simply be this; for what cause you find them more credible? Have they lived a better life? Have they sacrificed more greatly? Have they come back from death? Have they demonstrated dominion over creation and nature? Have they foretold the future? Have they come down from heaven? Can they forgive sin? And are they alive today?

If not then there's no reason – there is no reason that none of us today should walk away without giving ourselves to Jesus, beginning with our sin, "Lord Jesus, here are my sins. Thank you for your death and resurrection and forgiveness, so that now I can be friends with you and friends with others." That is what we exist for at Mars Hill. This is the heartbeat of Scripture. This is the heartbeat of Pastor Grandpa John. I pray, by God's grace, this is the heartbeat of me as your Pastor. There are so many things that we can argue about and disagree about, but this is where we find our joy. This is where we find our joy. Some of you know the Lord Jesus and you tasted this joy. Some of you are here today, and you will give your life to Jesus, and you will become Christians today. And with John tells you is this, "You are in the process of completing our joy."

Our joy is full and good, but it's not complete yet, because there's still people that God loves that haven't met him yet. They're still people that Jesus is pursuing, and he's been at work in your hearts and in your life. He has been pursuing you faithfully and graciously and patiently, and he is not given up on you because this affection for you. And when you give yourself to him, and you stop resisting him and you embrace Jesus as he has embraced you and you respond to him in that way, our joy will be complete. Some of you have friends and family and coworkers who have loved you and prayed for you, who have pursued you, and that's what I brought to get here today. And God knows the future, and he's the one that had to come today, because this is the day that he intends to embrace you and for you to embrace him back. Guys, I love you, and I love being your Pastor, and a love of God is doing here. And I have tremendous joy that we get to be the people of God. We get to forgive sin. We get to love Jesus. We get to love each other. But it's a good day for some of you to complete that joy by giving yourself to the Lord Jesus and participating with us as the children of God.

Reconcile to the father through the son by the power of the Spirit. This is why you're here. Everything else is secondary. This is primary. For those of you that you know the Lord Jesus, I give you this instruction to remind you in whom you've believed and why that it's a secure place for your faith. For those of you whom are here and are not Christians, this is my attempt to compel you without coercing you toward Jesus. And some of you will say, "What are you trying to convert me?" Yes, I am trying to convert you. I would love for you to have your sins forgiven, to be a friend of God and to embrace you as a brother or sister in Christ, and for you to follow in the legacy of the sinless God who came down from Heaven, died and rose for you, so that you could follow in his wake, and we could be with you forever in the kingdom. Yes, that is my terrible agenda. I love you very much and my goal is not to see you any longer separated from the God who loves you.

I lived that way for the first 19 years of my life. I've lived the last 14 years with the Lord Jesus, and after tasting that joy, I'm compelled to share that with you because he loves you, and so do I, and so do we. And that's the truth. So today is your opportunity to make your joy – to make our joy complete. For those of you that are Christians, I just want to encourage you to be thinking of friends and family and coworkers, people that you know and love that you could be praying for, that if they gave themselves to Jesus, that would complete your joy. And to be praying for and loving and speaking to them kindly about Jesus. For those of you who are not Christians, but you are here today and you'd like to become a Christian, it's very, very simple. It really is down to you and Jesus. Let's get all the religion and philosophy and perspectives and angles and conjecture and authors out of the way. Let's just go you and Jesus.

You need to turn from sin and trust in him. That's it. You'll be belonged to him and he will be a God, and he will love you and he will live with you and he will walk with you and he will change you for the better and for the best. You can do that simply where you are today, by simply acknowledging in your heart and your mind that you are a sinner, and that Jesus is not. And that you will either die for your sin, or he die for you, so you would thank him for dying for you. And you want to receive from him, his forgiveness and his life. And then you want to commit yourself to him, "Jesus I want to be a Christian. Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you for being alive and well. Thank you that you love me. I embrace you. I receive your love and forgiveness. I now belong to you." It is no more complicated than when two people stand at an altar and they both exchange vows. Providing it is heartfelt, then they are in relationship together forever. That is how it is between us and God. Jesus is our groom; we as the church are his beloved bride, and we pledge ourself to him with heartfelt devotion, and we live with him forever in joy and gladness.

Today is the day, if you have not done that, that you should. And in the brief amount of time that I've had, I've tried to give you every reason to not reject him and to eliminate all of the potential variables that would cause you to not. If you do give your life to Jesus today – if someone brought you that the Christian – let them know. Make their joy complete. Let one of the leaders or ushers know so that we can pray with you or for you. Drop by the information desk. Whatever it takes, grab someone. Inform them that you now belong to Jesus and have them pray for and love you today, so that their joy might be complete also.

I'm gonna pray for us now for those of you that give your life to Jesus today in the moment of prayer that I will soon give you. For those of you that do belong to Jesus, as you confess your sin, receive his forgiveness – that's how you prepare yourself for communion – which is where we remember Jesus' body and blood shed for our sin. Then you gonna come forward, as you're ready – those of you who are Christian or become Christians today – you can give up your tithes and offerings. But if you're not a Christian or your first-time visitor, do not give, okay. You are our guest. The Christians here will pick up the tab. We love you, we are very glad to have you as our guest. And we feel no necessity to inquire of any of your money or any of your works. We don't want anything from you. We want to love you and we want to present Jesus to you, and we want to love him back. That's our objective today.

And then we will sing and we will celebrate because God has found us, we have met him, and through that great transformation that he imparts to our life, John says that we have this complete joy. A complete joy compels us to sing and to celebrate and to worship and to thank Jesus.

Lord Jesus, we do love you. We thank you for the opportunity to gather, to study, to be the people of God. Lord Jesus, I am so grateful that you said you were God, and it was true. You said you came down from Heaven, and you did. You said that you lived without sin, and it's a fact. You forgave sin, and only you can. That you were the only way to eternal life, and not just another pointer to a path that we must plod along on our own. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you confirmed your deity as God. So there would be no question that you indeed proclaimed yourself to be Lord and God. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you were worshiped by the disciples and it now you allow us to worship you as well. Lord Jesus, we all have a God. We all need a God. Were gonna give ourselves to something or someone; I pray it would be you.

We thank you for your miracles, Lord Jesus, how you demonstrated that you were God, through your works and not just your words. Your words are powerful, but your works are also so convincing. Most importantly, we thank you for rising from death to conquer enemies of Satan, sin and death, and to take away the sin problem, which is indeed the root of all problems. And, Lord Jesus, we thank you that you know the future. You knew when we would be born. You knew who would come here today. You knew who you would love an open the heart and mind of. You knew who you would be pursuing and embracing. You knew, God, every hair on our head and every day of our life and every thought of our mind and every logging of our heart. Lord Jesus, you know it all and you know our future. You know which of us are gonna be with you forever. You know which of us right now – our hearts are melting from stone to soft tender clay that can be remolded and remade into love and kindness and grace and compassion.

And, Jesus, we thank you that you know our future. That one day you will call our name – you will call us from our graves, and that we will be your people, together with you forever. Jesus, there are so many things that can distract us and dissuade us. I pray in this brief time we have together today that we would heed the words of John. That we would find what he saw with his eyes, what he heard with his ears, and whom he embraced with his hands to be the most trustworthy and credible testimony that we've ever received. That we would bank all of eternity on that fact, and that we would find none more trustworthy than he. So, we long for the day when we'll see you, Lord Jesus, face-to-face and sit down with our buddy Pastor Grandpa John and here's some good stories about the things he didn't get a chance to put the Bible. But he saved the children when they get together in the end. Amen.