



1 John 1:1-4

The start of an epistle often gives us an insight into the nature of some of the issues or difficulties that the intended recipients were facing. The first verses from the first epistle of John seem to focus us on the fact that what the Apostle John was proclaiming was what they had seen and heard and physically felt. What they have been proclaiming concerning Jesus as “the Word of life” was something that was real and true, not imagined.

***Pray,** giving thanks for the risen Jesus who brings us with him into life eternal.*

1 John 1:5 - 2:11

If we think of a word beginning with the letter ‘L’ to describe God, most of us automatically would say “God is Love”. But here we see that “God is Light”. Reflect on what it means that God is ‘light’; that in him there is no darkness. Think of the fact that sin hides in the darkness, that life itself cannot exist without light, that ‘shining the light’ on something is often about seeing the truth. And many more things. And reflect on verse 9.

***Pray,** confessing that we can prefer to ‘walk in darkness’, not being honest with ourselves or God about the dark corners of our hearts that contain sinful desires. And thank God for the forgiveness won for us in Christ Jesus.*

1 John 2:12-17

Amongst the many new ideas and abbreviations that have arisen these days is one called 'FOMO', the 'fear of missing out'. Basically, an anxiety that others are having better experiences than you are, are somehow living better or more satisfying lives. John's readers may have been suffering 'FOMO', maybe that others were living more fulfilling or 'spiritual' lives. So John is encouraging them and us that they (and we) already have it all: sins forgiven, truly knowing God the Father and Creator of all, the evil one is defeated, and we have the word of God living in us.

***Pray,** casting our anxieties on Jesus, thanking God that He has given us all we need for this life and the next.*

Psalm 1

Psalm 1 might well be the original 'two ways to live' outline, with the contrast of the righteous and the wicked - you either belong to the righteous or the wicked and your destiny is bound up with what group you are in. The first word of the Psalm is *blessed* and last is *destruction*. These are the first things that the book of Psalms deals with. How do I become part of the congregation of the righteous? In John chapter 10, Jesus spells it out when he says that He is the door; that all who put their faith in him can enter the congregation of the righteous and be saved and find rest.

***Pray,** accepting Jesus as the door to the congregation of the righteous, and thank God for his provision of the way (and the truth and the life!).*

1 John 2:18-27

There are many things that make us want to ‘draw a line in the sand’. To exclude people or ideas from what we believe. Here, the Apostle John is drawing the line in the sand over the identity of Jesus, pretty much over the answer to the question, “who is this man?” The warning for us is to not be deceived - we have all we need in Jesus, there is no need for any new revelation that denies both the divinity and humanity of Jesus, in fact this type of teaching is called ‘anti-Christ’! And the sad thing is that the people teaching these things can often come from ‘among us’.

***Pray,** asking God to fill us with his Spirit so that we might remain in Jesus, trusting in the words of God that we have been taught in the bible.*

1 John 2:28 - 3:10

There are many instances where we can see something of the parents in a child. Especially as they grow, those who knew their parents at that age can often see similarities in the child. John here encourages his readers that we are children of God. What that means is that we ought to be growing in His likeness. Growing to be more like His Son Jesus. Even though Jesus has paid for our sin, the point being made is that it still matters if we willingly live a life of sin, for we are not growing in the likeness of the family to which we belong.

***Pray,** asking God to be at work in us so that we might flee from sin and grow evermore like his Son, our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.*

Psalm 2

In this Psalm we see that we are in a revolting world. A world that doesn't want anything to do with God, in fact with anybody who claims to have authority over us. But it is laughable to think that we can set ourselves up against God. In Jesus we have the king over all the Universe who we simply cannot stand against, in fact to face his wrath ought to cause us to tremble. And yet this same ruler of the Universe is our refuge, our safe place in the coming storm. It is both awe inspiring and deeply joyful to live in the presence of the Lord.

***Pray,** confessing that we don't always submit to God in all things, but thanking God for our Saviour Jesus, who is both our Lord and our refuge.*

1 John 3:11-24

They say that 'talk is cheap'. Which means that it is easier to say some things than to do them. The challenge here is that if we say we love God then we ought to obey Him and love each other. Not in words, but in actions. If the king of the Universe, Jesus, gave His life for us, then we also ought to lay down our lives for our fellow believers, loving them with the extravagant love that Jesus has showed to us all.

***Pray,** asking God to give us opportunities to love our fellow believers and the will to show our love to our Christian family in practice, not just in words.*

1 John 4:1-6

Here again is the line in the sand. Again it is about who we say that Jesus is. Anyone who wants to point us away from who Jesus is and what He has done for us is literally “anti-Christ”. And yet the glorious thing is that being in Christ by faith means that we are united with the One who has defeated the Father of all lies, we are one with the One who has overcome sin and death! As well as that, we can rest in the knowledge that when people reject the truth we proclaim, they are not rejecting us, but God. On the flip side, when people listen it is not because of us, but the Spirit. There is no room for arrogance nor despair.

***Pray,** asking God to give us the wisdom to those who will point us to Jesus, and not to be led away from Him.*

1 John 4:7-21

Here is a clear explanation of the gospel. And finally we come to the fact that God is Love. And again, if we claim to be a part of His family, then our lives ought to reflect His priorities. The challenge for us is that if we say we love God then we cannot NOT love His people. Just look at the how God loved His people: by giving His Beloved Son to save them. This is the extent to which He loves us, and that is the extent to which we should love His people as well. To know God is to love Him and to love those whom He loves.

***Pray,** asking God to be give you a heart for His people and the strength to love self sacrificially as He has done for us.*

Psalm 3

After entering the book of Psalms through Psalms 1 & 2 - hearing how following God is the only way to life, and that our only refuge is in Him - Psalm 3 welcomes us with a troubled life. And yet in the midst of struggle and persecution we hear the comforting words that our God is: protecting, sufficient, restoring, and accessible. And it ends with a benediction that declare a blessing to be upon the people of God. What a great encouragement in the midst of a stormy life.

***Pray,** asking God to be give you the reassurance that in Him we have all we need to weather the storms of this life, and that we would turn only to Him in times of trouble.*

1 John 5:1-12

There is often a flip side to reality that we don't always like to acknowledge. A classic case is the church that has the words of 1 John 5:12 in big letters on the outside of the building - but only the first half! Yes, the one who has the Son has life - that is a great and encouraging message that needs to be advertised to all people - and yet the reality is that the complete verse is also true. The one who doesn't have God's Son does NOT have life. The eternal life that God offers through Jesus is His message. It is not a human message that can be ignored.

***Pray,** asking God to strengthen our confidence in Jesus and to give us the urgency to proclaim his message that brings eternal life.*

1 John 5:13-21

Sometimes we can be worried that we might somehow have unwittingly done the ‘sin that leads to death’. Some people also get confused by the instruction of John to NOT pray asking God to forgive those people who commit the sin that leads to death. But take heart, the sin that leads to death is rejecting Jesus. And so John is saying that we ought not to pray that God would accept those people who reject his Son, their ONLY Saviour and Lord. But instead, focus on praying that God would restore those who trust in His Son as the sacrifice for their sin.

***Pray**, thanking God for his Son, asking God to send His Spirit to change the hearts of your non-believing friends and family that they may accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.*

1 John 5:20

Just one verse, one line, is sufficient for us to reflect deeply upon today. Some people can be confused by the last line of the letter. And yet it summarises the entire book. John has again and again emphasised that we must do two things: trust in Jesus as the Saviour and obey him by loving His people. It also captures the essence of the Christian life: to know God is love Him and worship Him - the pull to worship anything else is a lie from which we must flee.

***Pray** about those things that God has been convicting you of as you have read His word for us in John’s first letter.*

Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.
