

— 1 John —  
Lesson #3 Chapter 1:1-4

Before you begin this lesson, prepare your heart by going to the Lord for help in understanding His Word and wisdom in applying it. May you be blessed as you dig into this passage!

1. As you get started, list what you know about the author of this epistle. See how much you can come up with just off the top of your head.
2. Now let's piece together a portrait from the Scriptures of the writer of this epistle. See Mark 3:16-17; Acts 8:14-15; Galatians 2:9; Revelation 1:9. What do you learn about him?
3. How does the author often describe himself? See John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20. How does that description give insight into what the author considers to be most valuable in life?
4. What things do you learn about the *Word of Life* from verse 1?
5. Let's take a moment to look at the list given in verse 1 about the Word of Life. First, John says the Word of Life was from the beginning. What does John want us to understand about the *Word of Life* from that opening description? See John 1:1-2; 8:58; 1 John 2:13-14; Micah 5:2.

6. *Why* would it be important that John's readers understand the Word of Life was from the beginning? See also Isaiah 43:10; Colossians 1:17; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20.
  
7. We've just looked spent some time learning about the Word of Life who was from the beginning. Next, let's look at 4 more things about the Word of Life. What do you learn about the Word of Life from those four qualities listed in verse 1?
  
8. John wanted to strengthen and encourage the believers so they would enjoy fellowship with God to the fullest. He also wrote to refute false teaching that was infiltrating the church and undermining the believer's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gnostic heresy taught that "matter is inherently evil, and a divine being therefore could not take on human flesh."<sup>1</sup>

Because the false teachers taught that matter (anything created, anything of the flesh) was evil, they sought to diminish Jesus by claiming He could not have been fully God and fully man. This pernicious heresy goes straight to the heart of the gospel and seeks to unravel the redeeming work of Christ, who became a man, lived a perfect life, and died to make propitiation for sin (Philippians 2:7-8; Hebrews 2:11, 14-15, 17-18; 10:4, 10, 19-22).

What elements do you see in verses 1-3 that show how John was seeking to "prove" that Jesus was fully man?

"Such heretical views destroy not only the true humanity of Jesus, but also the atonement, for Jesus must not only have been truly God, but also the truly human (and physically real) man who actually suffered and died upon the cross in order to be the acceptable substitutionary sacrifice for sin (cf. Heb. 2:14-17). The biblical view of Jesus affirms His complete humanity as well as His full deity." ~John MacArthur<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983), 485.

<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1962.

“At the time John was writing, a false sect had arisen which became known as Gnosticism (Gk. *gnōsis* = knowledge). These Gnostics professed to be Christians but claimed to have *additional knowledge*, superior to what the apostles taught. They claimed that a person could not be completely fulfilled until he had been initiated into their deeper “truths.” Some taught that matter was evil, and that therefore the Man Jesus could not be God. They made a distinction between Jesus and the Christ. “The Christ” was a divine emanation which came upon Jesus at His baptism and left before His death, perhaps in the Garden of Gethsemane. According to them, Jesus *did* die, but the Christ did *not* die. They insisted, as Michael Green put it, that “the heavenly Christ was too holy and spiritual to be soiled by permanent contact with human flesh.” In short, they denied the Incarnation, that Jesus is the Christ, and that Jesus Christ is both God and Man. John realized that these people were not true Christians, and so he warned his readers against them by showing that the Gnostics did not have the marks of true children of God.” ~William MacDonald<sup>3</sup>

9. Why was it important to testify to *physically* seeing, hearing, and touching the Word of Life, especially after the resurrection? See John 1:14; 20:27-31; Acts 4:19-20; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, 12-19; 2 Peter 1:16-18.

Because Jesus is God’s revelation of Himself, He has a very special name: “*The Word of Life*” (1 John 1:1). This same title opens John’s Gospel: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (John 1:1). Why does Jesus Christ have this name? Because Christ is to us what our words are to others. Our words reveal to others just what we think and how we feel. Christ reveals to us the mind and heart of God. He is the living means of communication between God and men. To know Jesus Christ is to know God! ~Warren Wiersbe<sup>4</sup>

10. In verse 2 John says the Word of Life was *manifested*. Define *manifested* [Strong’s #5319 (NIV *appeared*)]. Now see some of the other places where the word is used: John 3:21; Romans 16:25-26; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 John 3:5, 8; 4:9, 14. From those references, what do you learn about some of the reasons the Word of Life was manifested?
11. After coming in contact with the manifested Word of Life, what did John and the other disciples do according to verse 2? What message did they communicate (verse 2)?

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<sup>3</sup> William MacDonald, [\*Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments\*](#), ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 2308.

<sup>4</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 474.

12. What do you learn about *the eternal life* according to verse 2?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
13. Why would John and the other disciples take such pains to “testify and proclaim” that message about *the eternal life* from verse 2? See verse 3 for your answer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
14. Trace the word *life* in verses 1-3. What truths unfold about *the life* in those verses? See also John 11:25-26; 14:6; 2 Timothy 1:10; 1 John 5:11-12, 20.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
15. Verse 3 picks up John’s thoughts from verse 1. Verse 2 is a little parenthetical aside that provides helpful details about the Word of Life. Now in verse 3, we read of John’s purpose in writing his letter. What is his purpose in writing according to verse 3?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
16. Define *fellowship* [Strong’s #2842] from verse 3.

“This word ‘fellowship’ is one of the important words in this letter. . . .The idea in the word is that of one person having a joint-participation with another in something possessed in common by both. A very touching use of the verbal form of this word was found in a fourth century inscription; a doctor of medicine had put up an inscription to his wife who had also studied medicine, and who had died. It read, “as with you alone I shared my life.” How beautiful it is when a sinner saved by grace comes to the sunset of life and can say to the Lord Jesus, “as with you alone I have shared by life.” ~Kenneth Wuest<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, [\*Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader\*](#), vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 95–96.

17. Explain how John's comments about *fellowship* follow his train of thought from verses 1-2. In other words, how does the context help us understand John's point about fellowship in verse 3?
  
18. Why is it crucial that we understand the need for fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ as we see in verse 3?
  
19. How do we gain that fellowship with God? See John 3:14-16, 36; Acts 4:12; 10:42-43; Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 John 5:11-12.
  
20. What reason does John give in verse 4 for telling them about the Word of Life in the previous verses?
  
21. How would his reader's understanding of those truths from verses 1-3 bring John joy?
  
22. How can those truths from verses 1-3 bring *you* joy today?

"There is something that every believer can do for his Lord. He must be able to tell of what he has tasted and handled of the Word of Life, and if he has not tasted and handled it, then he is not a child of God at all. The best teaching in the world is experimental. Nothing wins upon men like personal witnessing—not

merely teaching the doctrine as we find it in the Book, but as we have felt it in its living power upon our own hearts. When we begin to tell of its effect upon ourselves, it is wonderful what power there is upon others in that testimony.” ~Charles Spurgeon<sup>6</sup>

“We have now such supernatural conversation with God and the Lord Christ as is an earnest and foretaste of our everlasting abode with them, and enjoyment of them, in the heavenly glory. See to what the gospel revelation tends—to advance us far above sin and earth and to carry us to blessed communion with the Father and the Son. See for what end the eternal life was made flesh—that he might advance us to eternal life in communion with the Father and himself.” ~Matthew Henry<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Spurgeon, [\*Spurgeon Commentary: 1 John\*](#), ed. Elliot Ritzema, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 1 Jn 1:1.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Henry, [\*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume\*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2443.