

## I. The Trinity: Foundation of All Doctrine

The greatest doctrine in the Bible, without a doubt, is the doctrine of the Trinity. It is the basis by which everything rests. Not only is it the pattern of things that God does, but it is also the structure by which God builds everything in the Bible. One of the unique things about the Trinity is why a lot of people cannot grasp it; they cannot conceive of a God splitting Himself up into three distinct persons and yet being the same being or the same God.

Personally, I have never had a problem with that. I have never seen how a brown cow can eat green grass and give white milk, but it does. Life to me is a lot simpler than it is for a lot of other folks. I believe what the Bible says: when the Bible says that God can do anything, there is nothing too hard for God. God chose to do it that way. Just because I cannot figure out how He does it does not mean He could not do it. If I could figure everything out that God did, then He would not need to be God, and I could be. But I do not figure everything out.

I do know this: I know the Bible, and I know there has to be a Trinity. There has to be an absolute Trinity by which everything is based, because the Bible is just like the Trinity. You have God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and they are all distinct, but yet they are all one. When it comes to the Bible, you have sixty-six books, and each book is an individual book, but yet they are all one. You cannot have one without the other. That is one of the things where God, when He built His Bible, He built it on His own system of the Trinity.

## II. The Bible as the Foundation for Life

In the Bible, you have sixty-six books. Since we started our church, we have been focusing on helping you get to the place in your life where you really begin to grasp the concept of a New Testament local church. We have been building through the process into your individual lives, and we do this in a number of ways. We have been building the Bible itself into your life so that when you come away from it, you completely understand how the Bible fits together.

As I have said many, many times, I will spend an hour a week with anybody that wants to sit down and go through the Scriptures. If you want to be discipled, I will set you up with somebody that will walk you through the basic fundamentals of the Bible. Our goal here is to help you learn the Scriptures.

We are almost finished with the books of the Bible. We are going to enter into the book of 1 John today. That is the Epistle of John, not the Gospel. This one is all the way in the back of your Bible, right before the book of Revelation. There are three of them back here: 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John. Next week, we will be going through the fall program and laying all that out, showing you where we are going from the Bible with that. It will not just be a meeting where we talk about it; it is going to be based on the Word of God, as everything that we do. We are going to enter into the book of 1 John today, a very important book.

### III. The Unique Character of John and Character Studies

Last week, we studied the book of 2 Peter, and I gave you a short biosketch of the Apostle Peter. I also told you that you can take each apostle and do what we call in Bible study a character study. A character study is taking a man or a woman, or child, king, queen, whoever, taking some person out of the Bible and studying their life in the Scriptures, and then finding the parallels that fit into your own life.

I told you this last week, and I have mentioned it to you several times: we think that because we live in 2005 and we are reading events in the Bible that took place up to six thousand years ago, or in the time of Christ two thousand years ago, we think that because we are so far removed from that period of time that things are really different. The only thing that is different is we drive cars, they did not. Their clothes may be a little different. They maybe did not have McDonald's and Hardee's and places to go and eat. It appears to be different, but the truth of the matter is, man is always the same. Man's problems five thousand years ago are the same problems he has today. That is why character studies are so rich, because they show you that back then they struggled with the same things that you and I struggle with. A lot of the ways to overcome the pitfalls of our lives is to simply learn how they fell into those traps. You can kind of get a bird's eye view of how they got into it, why they should not have gotten into it, and certainly the consequences of getting into it. Many times, God shows you how they can get out of it. So, they are great studies.

Last week, we talked about Peter, and I told you that at some time in your life, you ought to go through an intense character study of all the twelve apostles. At the same time, I am telling you this: one of the greatest studies of the apostles you can take is the Apostle John. Of course, we have talked about this before, and I showed you how the Apostle John is probably the most unique man in the Bible and his writings. Keep in mind, he writes the Gospel of John, he writes 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John, and he also writes the book of Revelation, the last book in your Bible. Not only is John unique, but everything he writes is unique. I am going to tell you why that is in a few minutes, but I want to kind of lay the groundwork here.

At some point in your life, you need to begin to study the life of John and see the character studies that go along with it, because John represents, like no other man I know in the Bible, exactly what your life and my life should be in every sense of the word, in every sense of the way, in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The twelve apostles, and I have told you this before, some of you have heard it before, but a lot of you have not, really represent the kinds of Christians you have. You have three of them that anybody who reads the New Testament will call the inner three: Peter, James, and John. The rest of them are not very significant. I am not saying they do not do things and do good things, but I am saying you do not find them showing up at all the key areas. They do not write any books of the Bible afterwards. They are really not to the place like the inner three where they really seem to be plugged in. Of the ones that are left, one of them is a phony: Judas. He is a picture of an unsaved man who goes to church every Sunday, or an unsaved woman who goes to church every

Sunday, does everything everybody else does, but in reality has never had the life transformation of a relationship with Christ. So, it is a great study.

Those inner three, Peter, James, and John, are always experiencing greater things than the rest of the apostles. You can go through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and you can see they are always where the great spiritual things are happening. That is true of this church and it is true of every church. You are going to have within any group of people called a church some people who really find out where the action is, and that is where they are at, and others just kind of take it in stride. I realize that many of you are in the process of getting to that point, but it is still true. You are going to find in every church in this city and around this country that churches basically break down like that.

John goes the distance when nobody else does. When Peter denies Christ, when James kind of disappears from the scene, when Christ is being crucified and when Christ is being whipped and beaten in there with Pontius Pilate in the crowd, you will find that John is right there in the middle of it. He goes all the way. When Christ is hanging on the cross, the only apostle that goes the distance and is there with Him is the Apostle John. He is an incredible guy.

John does something that no other man in the Bible can do. John does something that no other man in the Bible does. In the Old Testament, we have David, and David probably is in the Old Testament the contemporary of John in the New Testament, because there is no man like David in the Old Testament. The Bible says that David was a man after God's own heart. Mark the word "after." The Bible says that David was a man after God's heart, but John did something that even David did not do. If you know the story as well as I do, they are down there at the Last Supper, and the Bible tells us in the Gospels' account that John does something that no other man in the Bible had ever done. The truth of the matter is, the only people in the world that can do this are people like you and me, the church. That is why John represents you and me.

Do you know what John does? John lays his head on the breast of the Lord Jesus Christ at the Last Supper, and he hears the very heartbeat of God. You have probably heard pastors all your life, if you have been to church and grew up in church, tell you that you have to get God's heart, you have to get God's heartbeat. John is certainly a man in the Bible who does just that. John does something that no other man in the Bible was able to do, or at least did. The only people I know in the world today that can do what John did is you and I. That is why he represents us. Every child of God, every child of God that is truly saved, washed in the blood, and on their way to heaven, should have as their goal in life to get to the place where you understand what God's heartbeat is. You can actually hear God's heart and know what God wants you to do in your life.

John accomplished this because he had a very intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. You and I can do it because God has given us a Bible. If you and I ever get to the place where we actually find out what God wants us to do with our lives and then do it, if we ever figure out this big old plan of God to the tune that we know where we fit in and then take the rest of our lives doing it, it will be because through this Bible we found God's heartbeat and God showed us where His heart is at and what He wants us to do.

That is why we spend so much time teaching the Bible. That is my job as pastor: to make sure that everybody, I told this to somebody this week, I have talked to so many people this week I cannot remember who I have said it to. I am just hoping everything I said was true. My job as pastor is to help you get to the place in your life where you really find that heartbeat. If I do not give you the best shot, the best opportunity for every man and woman that is saved here this morning to get to the judgment seat of Christ and get everything that God has for you, that is my job, that is my only job. The job of any pastor is to make sure that I give you every available opportunity that at the judgment seat of Christ, I cannot make you do it, but my job is to give you every available tool, every available opportunity that you produce the right personal relationship with God, the right marriage with God, the right family with God, and then through that God takes your life and you fulfill in your life what God wants you to do. That is my job. My job is to produce men and women who replicate the Apostle John, who through their intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ begin to hear and understand the heartbeat of God.

You see it in John's writing; that is why his writings are so unique. Because of that intimate relationship, Matthew portrays Christ as the King of the Jews, Mark portrays Him as a servant, Luke portrays Him as the Son of Man, but John portrays Him in His most classic form. John portrays Him as the Son of God. John focuses on the most intimate aspect of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is that He was the eternal Son of God.

*John 1:1-5*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

*The same was in the beginning with God.*

*All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

*In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*

*And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

*John 1:14*

*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

That is Jesus Christ. You can see the intimacy that John had when he wrote.

## IV. The Purpose and Uniqueness of John's Writings

The Gospel of John is written for one reason, and the reason it is written is found in the last chapter, in the last verse of John chapter 20.

*John 20:31*

*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

The Gospel of John is written for one purpose, one main purpose, and that is for men to trust Christ as their own personal Savior. It is the most intimate of the four Gospel books, and John writes it. When he writes the Gospel of John, he portrays Christ so that men reading it will get saved. If a lost man or a lost woman will begin to read the Gospel of John, in time you will get saved. That book displays Christ in such an intimate way, and God's Spirit has already told us that the reason why it was written is that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and by believing that you might have life through His name. It is an incredible book. That is why you will find that the one verse people throw around about winning people to Christ is John 3:16. When men do not want to produce the whole Bible, and they just want to give a portion of the Bible, in other languages or even in our language, what book will they always print and pass out? The Gospel of John. The Gospel of John is a book that shows you Christ as your Savior and as God's Son. That is one of the reasons why John's book is totally unique.

John is the only man in the Bible, and this is what sets him apart from everybody else, even Paul to a certain degree. John is the only man in the Bible that when he writes, and he writes the last books of the Bible, he has all of the completed New Testament on the table before him. There is nothing else written after John writes. That gives him a very unique perspective that every other writer in the Bible did not necessarily have. When he writes, he has everything in front of him that everybody else in the Old Testament and the New Testament has written. So, he comes at it and writes what he writes, and details out what he writes, and shows us in a very in-depth way what your life and my life should be when we have a completed Bible, that more sure word of prophecy. His books detail out for us the things that we need to see.

First of all, we saw the Gospel of John, and we are moving our way into 1 John here. The Gospel of John reveals Christ as the eternal Son of God and shows us the salvation that God has provided us. In 2 John and 3 John, you are going to find that he deals with Israel directly in the Tribulation period. When we come through those books, and we are probably going to study those books together because they are small enough we can do it, you are going to find how they impact the nation of Israel, and they pick up the themes of the Old Testament and carry them through.

Then you have the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is the book that he writes that really lays out everything in the church age. He writes the book of Revelation in three tenses: past, present, and future. When he writes it in a tense of past, we see the church age. When he writes it in the present or the future, we see the latest in church that you and I are in right now. When he writes the book of Revelation into the future aspect of it, we see the Rapture, the Tribulation, Second Coming, and Millennial eternity. Everything is laid out because John is writing with a unique perspective. He sees everything that you and I see because he has the completed Bible, and he puts the finishing touches on it, and he lays it out.

## V. 1 John: Fellowship in Tribulation

That brings us to the book of 1 John. Remember, the book of 1 John is a general epistle. You are going to see that as we have already laid out for you that these books directly go to the nation of

Israel, but there is a lot of stuff in 1 John that lines up with what Paul writes. We can make some great spiritual applications here, and we are going to do that today.

The book of 1 John lays out two perspectives:

1. It lays out the perspective of Israel suffering and going through the Tribulation period.
2. It lays out you and I as New Testament Christians suffering and going through the tribulation of our lives.

Each of us has things we struggle with. Out there tomorrow morning, and it may not even wait till tomorrow morning, it may be waiting for you when you walk out of this room today, but out there in this nasty old world lies every creeping thing that wants to destroy your relationship with God. You can have the best day in your life today, and you can get all filled up with God, but you will walk out there, and it will just take one phone call to ruin your day. That is this old world.

There is coming a day when the nation of Israel is going to have to go through Daniel's 70th week, that great time of persecution, and the book of 1 John is written to them and also written to you. We do not have to go through the great Tribulation period as Israel does, but every one of us until Jesus comes back are going to have to go through the trials and tribulations of life on planet earth. This book tells you that you and I can have fellowship in the midst of our tribulation. This book tells Israel that in the midst of them going through the great seven years where they are persecuted because of what they have done with the Word of God in Christ, that in spite of that, once they get plugged into where God is, they too can have fellowship.

The book of 1 John shows you how to have the victory in the midst of your trials. The key to the victory in your life and my life in the midst of the struggles that we are going through right now is nothing more than your fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the key. The key to your victory and my victory of staying on this planet and living on earth with all of the things that we have to put up with. Some of you, we all have various circumstances. Some of you have unsaved husbands that you desperately want to get saved. Some of you have unsaved wives or unsaved family members. Some of you have problems in your marriage. Some of you have all kinds of circumstances. It does not matter what it is. You can have victory over everything that the devil throws at you in life, but you cannot have victory without true Bible fellowship with Him, because that is the key to your victory.

The book of 1 John is the defining book in the Bible on what New Testament Bible-based fellowship with Jesus Christ is. The breakdown of 1 John is very easy. We always give you a breakdown chapter by chapter, and here it is:

- Chapter 1: Fellowship in the Light
- Chapter 2: Fellowship in Love
- Chapter 3: Fellowship in Life

They are all built around your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. You see how the Apostle John in every aspect is so unique? He fits into your life and my life greater than any other apostle. He is an incredible individual.

Then you have chapter 4 and chapter 5. While chapters 1, 2, and 3 deal with victory through fellowship, chapter 4 and chapter 5 deal with victory by faith. Chapter 4 talks about loving one another. Chapter 5 talks about our loving God. The book is written to show you that true Bible-based fellowship with God is not based on loving God, and that is what you are taught today, but rather knowing God.

## VI. Knowing God vs. Loving Things

If you went through the average bookstore in Kansas City today, or really anywhere in the world, and you picked up a commentary on the book of 1 John, and there are many, and you began to read through that commentary. A commentary is a man who writes about a book in the Bible that hopefully will give you insight and help you break down the book. I have told you before, and I do not want to confuse you, there is no greater commentary on the Bible than the Bible itself, but it is never wrong to get and glean ideas from other men and women who learn from the Bible, and you can learn from them.

If you would take your average commentary on 1 John, you would find that every writer will tell you that the theme of 1 John is love. That is what they all say. You turn on the radio and hear Dr. Swigley, and he will tell you when he comes through 1 John, the theme of 1 John is love. That is all you hear, that is all you read. I remember being brought up in that, but when I was growing up, I was a lot like some of you are, and I wanted to learn the Bible. I will never forget the first time I studied the book of 1 John in depth. I went through and I thought to myself, "I want to see if that is true." So I began to look at each chapter, each verse, and I found out, as I said, the Bible is the best commentary on itself. I found out that the theme of 1 John is not love, but the theme of 1 John is "to know." I found in five little chapters twenty-seven times where God uses the phrase "to know," "you can know," "knowing." That struck me because that is so typical of the American way of life.

There is a reason why, as a child of God, you should stay as far as you can from the world. I know that some of you think that preachers just say that because they do not want you staying out late Saturday night and not coming to church. Obviously, you need to be in church, but that is not the bottom line. The bottom line is this: the more you hang out with the world, the more the world is going to rub off on you. It is as simple as that. You have got to learn and understand that the world system of everything is totally degraded from what the Bible says.

Take the word "love." If there is any word that has absolutely been apostatized and destroyed in its real meaning and concept in America, I am not talking about Christians yet, I am just talking about the world, it is the word "love." Nobody today understands what that word means. This is so true. The reason why you as a child of God need to stay away from the world once you get saved is because the world's influence will always rub off on you as the child of God without you knowing it. It is so true. America's brand of Christianity is just like America's concept of love. Americans fall in love with things. You hear it all the time. I hear God's people doing it, and I know God's people know better, and I know they really do not mean it when they say it.

The world loves things. You see it in the bumper stickers. I have always thought to myself that the mentality of any nation can always be determined by what is on the bumper stickers. I believe that. You see bumper stickers on the back of pickup trucks that say, "He that dies with the most wins." That may look like a funny little thing. We may giggle at that when we drive down there, but you realize that is a philosophy in American life. Another one you see all the time: "The difference between men and boys is the number of their toys." We look at that and we laugh, but you know that is a call to our mindset in America today. America as a world system believes that the more you get, the better off you are. That is just the way that it is. If you are not careful, you will find that God's people fall into the same category. That is why Americans do not love people. America loves things.

That is why when a woman sees the house of her dream, she will make this kind of statement: "I love that house." A guy watches television and sees the new RXV Mazda 29-ZX4321, and he says, "Whoa, I love this car." A guy walks into someplace and sees a brand new shotgun, and he likes to hunt, and he thinks immediately, he can just see himself in the field, pheasants flying everywhere, and he can boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, and get his limit in twenty minutes and be back home for lunch, and he says, "I love this shotgun."

There is a subtle philosophy that is degrading American society: you lose the definition of the concept from the Bible of love when you spend your life loving things that cannot love you back. There are only two things in all of this world that are going to last for all of eternity. I am going to tell you right up front, they are the only two things worth loving, because they are the only two things that are going to last for all of eternity. The new shoes you love will wear out. The new dress, you will walk in like the commercial and you will say, "Does this dress make me look fat?" And he will say, "You betcha," because he is not paying attention. All the things in this world are going to go.

There are only two things worth loving in this world:

3. The Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.
4. The souls of men.

When we come to the place that we, without even knowing it, we hang out with the world, we begin to take the world's definition of things. This is why, for those of you who are working with me in discipleship and a little bit later on in counseling, this will answer a big question for you why some people do not make it. It is always a heartache for me when you try to work with somebody and you give them the best shots you can. I understand that not everybody is going to make it. I feel bad about it, but at least I understand why everybody does not make it. The answer is simple: we have a problem that we love the things of this world more than we do the things of God.

It is very subtle, and I did not say that to take away the joy of buying a new dress and new shoes. I think that, ladies, that is a thing in life. We all like to have new things, and there is nothing wrong with it. I am not one of these preachers up here that preach against that. I am making a point. My point is this: if you are not careful with that kind of mentality, you will wind up, and this is where 21st century and 20th century Laodicean Christianity has become, that you try to

love God without knowing God. That is where we have come today. That is why they do not make it.

Take a young man or a young lady that comes out of the world today, and we have already had some in our short two years that are here. They come in, they really want to do what is right. I believe they will come down many times to make a profession of faith, or they will do something. But the bottom line is, after two or three weeks, you never see them again. The reason why they do not is because to them, they just approach God like everything else in life. This is why marriages fail in America today. This is why young couples that get married only last two or three years. In our generation growing up, nobody got a divorce. When I was ten or nine years old, divorce was a terrible thing. Nobody did it except movie stars. But today, everybody does it. It is the easy alternative, and you know why that is? It is because we try to approach relationships from a worldly position that we fall in love with somebody without getting to know that person. When you fall in love with somebody, in time, if you do not get to know him and love, how many times have I heard, "Well, that is not the person I married." How many times have I heard, "Well, he deceived me, he gave me one thing, a vibe, a signal this way, but after we got married, I found out there was another whole series of things."

That is the way God's people approach God. That is why it will not work. We approach God like we approach getting married, or we approach this. We love God today; it is an emotional thing. We never get into the Bible. Nobody ever disciples us. Nobody ever helps us lay out the Scriptures. So, it is just like when the shoes wear out, you love a new pair of shoes. When the car gets some miles on it, you trade it in for a new one. When the dress does not fit anymore or it wears out, you go buy another one. When you love God today and you do not learn to know Him, the devil is going to have a better deal for you tomorrow, and you will just trade God in for that. That is how it works.

You cannot fall in love with God. You have to learn to love God. Because when you learn to love God, you get to know Him. To know Him is to love Him. When you get to know Him, there is no way you are going back to the world. Until you invest the time in your life to let me or somebody else plug you into the Scriptures, get you disciplined, get you taught, get you trained. You may be sitting here this morning and you have made some of those mistakes. I do not care. God does not care. God does not care what mistakes you have done in the past. God only cares what you want to do with what you hear today. You could have screwed your life up from one end to the other, and it does not make any difference. God will unwind it and untangle it at the moment you start to say, "I am going to learn to know Him."

John learned to know Him. When he learned to know who God was, he fell in love with God. Trying to fall in love with God and maintain a relationship and fellowship with God when you do not know God is ridiculous. I tell people all the time when they come in, and I use it all the time because it is such a simple yet point-knit illustration in a relationship, marriage, or relationship with God or whatever. People come in with me and they will talk about some of the problems that they have. Instinctively, at some point, I will say this: one day when I came home from work, my wife told me that the refrigerator was broken. She said she was going to call the repairman. I said, "Well, don't do that yet, because before we spend the money, there is one of

those little manuals that come with it that tell you how to troubleshoot it. Maybe we just got a switch, got a throw, or maybe there is something. We just got to hit it right. So don't do that just yet. Let me get it." So I go over here to the drawer, which is a library of manuals, open it up, and I start throwing them out. I have every manual in there, but I cannot find the one for the refrigerator. So after about an hour and a half of fruitless search, I decide that I will fix the refrigerator with a manual from the washing machine.

What are the odds that I am going to fix my refrigerator with the owner's manual from my washing machine? The odds are not very good. By the same token, if you are going to build a relationship with God and you are going to have a relationship with Him, you are going to have to get the book that He wrote you that tells you how you operate and how you get broken, and then how to fix yourself when you get broken. That book is the Word of God. That is what John does.

## VII. The Christian Declaration of Independence (1 John 1)

Let us turn to 1 John chapter 1. With that kind of introduction, let us look at chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 very quickly here. You have to get that before you can get this. In chapter 1, we have what I call the Christian Declaration of Independence. That is very important. I am going to read it to you.

*1 John 1:1-10*

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;*

*(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)*

*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

*And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:*

*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

*If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

I do not know of any greater chapter in the Bible as far as that contains everything you and I need to know to begin to have a relationship and a victory through the fellowship than this chapter. If there is some place in the Bible, I missed it. This thing is one of the greatest things I have ever found.

I said this was the Christian Declaration of Independence. A declaration is to declare something. In 1776, thirteen little colonies got together and kicked King George V out of America, and they made a declaration that they broke with England. That declaration led to the Revolutionary War, which led to about twelve, thirteen years later, to the writing of our Constitution and the Declaration of our Independence, which was a formal doctrine in saying that we are no longer under the control of King George V. We now are on our own. We are a sovereign nation. We will sink and swim based on what we have, but we no longer are under the shackles or the oppression of the land of England.

There has to come a time in your life when you as a Christian declare that the shackles of this old world are not going to hold you in bondage anymore from what God wants you to do. Just as the colonial soldiers shook off the shackles of England, you and I as the child of God, at some point in your life, have to shake off the shackles of this world and say, "I am free. I am not going to be under bondage anymore. I am going to live my life the way God wants me to live, and I am going to begin to have that fellowship with Him that God wants me to have."

He says in 1 John 1:3, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Verse 4, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." There is no joy in your life without the fellowship of God in your life. That is why some of you look like you have been baptized in dill pickle juice this morning. That is why God's people run around with all the doldrums all the time. That is why they are always into defeat. That is why they are always whining. They always have some kind of problem. There is always something wrong in their life. I am not saying that once you really plug into God that you are not going to have problems, but you have got a better deal because you have got joy and the victory through your fellowship that you do not have right now, because we love things more than we love God.

Then verse 7, which is probably the greatest verse anywhere in the Bible that defines what fellowship is. We think that churches are famous for this, and we think that fellowship is after the service we are all going to go out to eat. We think, "Well, we are going to get together over at somebody's house this weekend. We are going to have a little Christian fellowship." That usually means you are going to order a couple of pizzas, sit down and play some games and have some fun. There is nothing wrong with that. But that is not the Bible fellowship that he is talking about. You have got to have one or one wherein lies the joy and the security and everything that God has for you.

Chapter 1 is written to show you that real Bible-based fellowship with God is not based on your spiritual fantasy of what you think God is like, or loving God like you love a puppy, or a new dress, or a new car, or a new house, but rather an absolute standard, the Word of God, that as you read and study and pray and labor over it, you begin to know God. As you know God, you love

God. As you love God, you want to be more like God. Therefore, you fellowship. That is why it says, "If we walk in the light, Word of God, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." You have got to have fellowship through the book.

That is why every Sunday, every Thursday, every time we are together, I point you back to the principles of the Word of God. There is not one person that I meet with throughout the week that everything we do does not go back to that book. There is not everybody that comes in to see me, but I do not point them back to that book. Because that book is the key to your security. That book is the key to your salvation. That book is the key to your fellowship. The fellowship is the key to your joy. The fellowship and the joy is the key to your victory.

*Psalms 119:105*

*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

What a great passage. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Let me give you a definition of my fellowship with God. I give you the Bible. Let me show you now how I take the Word of God, which says, "If we walk in the light, as He is in light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son." That is the doctrinal side of it. Let me show you how I make a practical application of that to my life.

One day I read through the Bible over in Psalms 119, I found that very verse, 105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." That is pretty heavy doctrine. 1 John 1:7, pretty heavy doctrine. "If we walk in the light, as He is in light, we have fellowship one with another." Then in my own personal life, I began to look at that thing and break it down. Because I was reading the Word of God and I was studying the Word of God because I wanted to have a relationship with God, then when did it hit me? "That word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." When I read the Word of God because of my fellowship, that book becomes my reading light. It illuminates what I am reading.

Sometimes the world hurts you, people hurt you, circumstances hurt you, and you feel all by yourself. I realized that that Word of God was a heating lamp that warmed my soul in the cold old world winds. I realized that I had a path that I had to go down, and a devil had laid some claymore mines, some booby traps, some fungi stakes, all the way down through there. Then I realized walking down life's road that through my fellowship, and with that book and the light that it was, that that book became a safety light that I could see before I stepped on those landmines. I realized that I had a journey to go all through life, that God was going to take me all through life where He wanted me to go. I began to realize that as I read my Bible and I got to know more about God and that book and I began to love God for who He is, not for what I thought He was, and I began to realize that on this journey, that Bible through my fellowship became my traveler's lamp. It showed me the way.

So I went down through my life, I realized that the world was darkness, and God was light. What our lives really are is this: at point A right here, you got saved. And point Z over here is where the Lord is going to take you home, either in the Rapture or you are going to die. In God's mind, He has your life mapped out as far as what He wants you to do from point A to point Z. You all

understand that. He has it, the blessings, the trials, nothing surprises God. Nobody runs into the throne room tomorrow morning and says, "Do you know what happened to Bob Alexander this morning?" Nobody. That fact is laid out numerous times in the Word of God, that the sovereign mind of God knows from point A to point B where He wants us to go, what He wants us to do.

If you would look at a graph of your life, and we are great graph people today, we kind of do all kinds of chart things, you would find that your walk on that line probably goes like this all your life. Sometimes now you are here, now you are here, then you are here. Some of you, you are like this. Those exaggerated moves mark the days you got off the mark that God wanted you to be on. You are out here in the world doing your own thing. When it comes to your life and my life as a Christian on the line of God, keep those things as tight to that line as you can. Do you know why? Because it is dark out there. We are like little children, and all little children are scared of the dark. As long as you stay on the line, you are okay. You get out there, you are on your own. Do you know why? Because when I am on this line, I have a night light that keeps me from being scared of what is in the dark. Every Christian's life, when you get home to heaven, if God graphs it out or charts it out, it is going to be how much you varied off that line. That is your fellowship.

There is no fellowship outside of you knowing the Word of God. You may think your fellowship is that nice warm feeling you got down inside when you do something nice for people. That is not it. You may think fellowship is going to church and doing this or doing that. That is not it. Fellowship is purely based on what you did this last week with you and God in that book. It is as simple as that. I think the most tragic thing in my life is I look back at the end of the week and I find out who or what I fellowshiped more than I did with God. That is the tragedy in life for me. So you are going to see that chapter one defines for us what fellowship is. That should be clearly fixed in your mind.

## VIII. The Doctrines of Propitiation and Advocacy (1 John 2)

Now we are going to come to chapter two. In chapter two, I am going to show you what fellowship is based on, doctrinally from the Bible.

*1 John 2:1-2*

*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

*And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Your fellowship with God, and consequently your victory through that fellowship, is based on two great doctrinal principles that are absolutely unheard of today. If you do not believe me, just go to the next pastor you find and ask him to give you a Bible definition, forget that, ask him to give you any definition on the doctrine of propitiation. Just ask him. There is no Christian on the face of this planet. You young Christians, I am cutting you slack because you are learning, so do not even take this personal. But there are no Christians who have been saved five, ten, fifteen,

twenty years that are going to convince me that you understand biblical fellowship if you cannot understand the doctrine of propitiation and the doctrine of the advocacy of Jesus Christ in your life. Your fellowship is based on it. That just goes to show you how little God's people know about the Word of God, that they have been saved five, ten, fifteen years, going to churches all their life, and probably never in the whole time they were there heard ever a message on the great doctrine of propitiation or the doctrine of the advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Two of the fundamental doctrines that everything in the Bible is based on, and you cannot have fellowship with God if you do not understand them.

Let us talk about them quickly here. The doctrine of propitiation means the reconciled to opposing parties, in this case, me and God. God is holy, I am not. There is no way God can fellowship with me. In the Old Testament, when God the Father came down and walked through the nation of Israel's camp, He had to order them to get everything unholy out of the camp because God's holy presence could not walk in the midst of unholiness. If there is anybody in this world that is unholy, it is me and you. God in that sense cannot fellowship with you and me. He cannot. There is no way that a holy God can come down and fellowship with me as a sinner, because something had to reconcile me to God. That reconciling factor was the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary to appease God's wrath and to pay for sin that would allow me to fellowship with Christ after I got saved, because the only way God can fellowship with me is through Christ. That is why when I got saved, and you find it from one end to the other in the book of Ephesians, you find the phrase "in Christ," "in Christ," "in Christ." When you got saved, you got in Christ, and that is the only way God can fellowship with you. That is why Christ had to come down and die, and when He came down and died and did that and provided a way for you and for me to become in Christ, He became the propitiation. He reconciled God to man by the death of Christ on the cross. If you do not have that down, you are not even in a ballpark, you are not even in a parking lot. That is an absolute essential doctrine.

Then the next one is the advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have a lot of people today who believe they can lose their salvation. You have people today who believe all kinds of things. You have people who believe they do not sin anymore after they are saved. You have them on both ends of the spectrum, and in either case, you have somebody who does not understand the doctrine of the advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. An advocate is a go-between. The Bible tells me in many, many places in the Bible that in Romans 8:26, "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Christ Himself is the go-between between me and God to reconcile the differences between my stupidity and God's holiness and perfectness. He is my advocate. He is the one that takes care of me, takes care of my salvation, and takes care of everything in my life that I cannot take care of myself. Christ is the go-between between God and man. He took my side because of the blood.

You find that in Job chapters 1, 2, and 3. It is an Old Testament case, but it is the same picture. The Bible says there was a day when Satan went before the throne, or the angels, sons of God, went before the throne, and Satan also. When Satan went up there, he does what his job is right now as the accuser of the brethren. He says to God, "What about Job?" God said to him, but then he says, "You know what? That guy will curse you to his face because he only loves you because

of things." The devil was banking that Job loved God like you and I do now. Do you know why that cannot happen today? The devil is still the accuser of the brethren, but he is not accusing you and me. If he is accusing anything today, he is accusing Israel.

Let me give you a scenario up in heaven. There is a day in heaven when all the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also comes in. He comes up there to the throne and he says to God the Father, "Hey, what about Bob Alexander down there, huh? What about him?" God does not say a word. He says, "What about that old Phil Christie guy?" God does not say a word. He says, "What about that Sandy Middy?" God starts to say something but then stops. God does not say a word. Do you know why God did not say a word? Because right to the right of His throne stands up a man, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Lord Jesus Christ says, "Father, forget what he says or whatever he is going to say, because it does not make any difference, because Bob Alexander, Sandy Middy, Phil Christie, on such a day, put their life and trust in My death on the cross, and they are in Me. Father, when he makes an accusation about Bob Alexander, Phil Christie, or Sandy Middy, or any other Christian, he is making his accusation against Me." God says, "Good enough. Next." He cannot get you. Do you know why? Because you are in Christ. That is the advocacy of Jesus Christ. He is the go-between. When the devil says, "What about Bob Alexander?" the Lord says, "What about him? He got saved, and he is under the blood, and he is in Me. Do you have something else you want to talk about, or are you on your way out?" Nothing else to say. Two of the greatest doctrines in the Bible, my friend, you have got to know those.

*1 John 2:15-16*

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

If any man loved the world, the love of the Father is not in him. All that is in the world will destroy the fellowship you have with God, and that is how God takes it away.

*Genesis 3:6*

*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

When the devil wanted to come down and destroy the plan of God and take that thing out, destroy Adam and Eve, he hit them with these three strings right here. Genesis 3:6: "When she saw that tree and the Bible says that it was good for food," that is the lust of the flesh; "pleasant to the eyes," that is the lust of the eyes; "desire to make one wise," that is the pride of life. Down she went. Have you ever noticed in Matthew chapter 4, when the devil came to the Lord Jesus Christ and tried three ways to get Him, to tempt Him, it was through the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life? That is the way he always does it. Any Christian young man or young lady, mom or dad, they hit the skids and lose their fellowship with God and go their own

way, no matter how they try to pretend they are serving God, but it is sticking out all over you that it is things in life you are looking at. It went down one of these three ways, or a combination of these three, or in some cases one, two, and three: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life. You better get it.

He says in 1 John 1:5, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." The old world will take your fellowship faster than you can get it. That is why I told you early and I am telling you again, when you get saved, get as far away from the world as you can. You have friends that are still in the world, try to win them to Christ, try to be their friend, but you go your own way.

## IX. The Hope of the Resurrection (1 John 3)

Chapter 3 is a great chapter on our resurrection body and the day God comes for us, the Rapture of the church.

*1 John 3:1-3*

*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

*And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

What a great passage. Remember last week I told you about the three promises in the Bible:

5. God gave a promise to save you.
6. God gave a promise to keep you.
7. God gave a promise to come and get you.

This was a great promise on God coming and getting you. He says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." That is why you should not hang out with the world. Verse 2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Right now I am a son of God, but I still look like Bob Alexander because the Bible says in Romans chapter 8 and numerous other places the thing that is saved about me is inside. It is my soul.

Look at verse 3. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." That promise that someday God is coming for me is going to get me through tomorrow. When the world comes to an end tomorrow and all my problems come down on top of me and it seems like the world comes to an end, or for you and you hit it at work and it is a bad day or this or that or something goes wrong in your life, the greatest thing that gets me through everything in life and every bad situation is this: this is only temporary down here. There is coming a time when it is going to be incredibly a lot better.

*Romans 8:18*

*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

It is incredible.

## X. Trying the Spirits (1 John 4)

Then we come to chapter 4. In chapter 4, this is something you all better get. It is part of your fellowship. It is a great chapter on not being deceived. This concept is absolutely foreign today in most of God's people.

*1 John 4:1*

*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

Look at verse 6.

*1 John 4:6*

*We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*

There it is again. "Not loveth God." "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us." See that thing? There it is again. Two times in one verse. "Know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." There should never be a child of God. I know some of you young Christians, and I keep putting you into this category because you are still growing and learning and you are learning how to do it. But you have been saved ten, fifteen years. There should be absolutely no confusion in your life about what is good teaching and what is bad teaching. The Bible says, "Try the spirits." There is a Christian in Kansas City today, maybe other than ten people probably, that know what that means and know how to do it.

The Bible teaches four spirits on this earth, and whether you know it or not, man can have three of the four:

8. You have an animal spirit; man cannot get that.
9. You have your human spirit; you all have that.
10. You have the devil's spirit; people get that.
11. Then you have God's Spirit; you get that when you get saved.

Here is how it works. There is no reason for a child of God to be confused.

*Romans 8:16*

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

Here is how it works. I am saved. Because I am saved, I have the Holy Spirit of God living. It is just not complicated. The day I got saved, the Holy Spirit of God got inside me. It is living inside me. God wrote me a book, my own manual. That book was also written by the Holy Spirit of

God. So now I have the Spirit of God in me. I have the book that that Holy Spirit of God wrote that everything wants me to know. Now it is not dependent on me to understand that book. Why? Because that Word, that book is a reading lamp. When I open it up, the Holy Spirit of God turns on the lights and shows me what He wants me to see.

When I go to church, when I come to Thursday night Bible study, when I come to Sunday morning, what I do for you is I show you how to use that lamp in all the different scenarios. You get it a little bit farther along, and I will show you how to take out that little 40-watt bulb you have right now and put a three-way in. You can crack that sucker all the way up to 120. You will turn this on, boom. That is some light, boom. That is some more light, boom. Well, that is a lot of light. That is what the Word of God does as you grow. Right now, the majority of us are working with a 40-watt light bulb. Some of you, it got burned out; you need to be replaced. I can do that for you too, no extra charge. When you get a little bit farther on, boom. Up to the next one, 60 watts, 100 watts, wow. Next one, boom. Then one of these days, you are going to come down and open up that book and turn on that old reading lamp, and God has done the nastiest trick in the world. He took out that little three-way and put a flood lamp in it. The whole thing just becomes into view.

The Holy Spirit of God living inside me, the Holy Spirit of God wrote that book. The Bible says that that Spirit bears witness with my Holy Spirit inside me that I am saved. Do you know how I know I am saved? Because when I read that book, the witness of the Spirit comes from that book and the Spirit that wrote it to the Spirit inside, and that Holy Spirit says, "You got it, son, you got it, you got it, you got it, your fellowship, you got it, you got it." When I go hear somebody preach, turn on the radio, turn on a news broadcast, because the Spirit of God is in me and I am having fellowship and I am walking in that light as He is in the light and I am having fellowship with Him. When I hear something that does not go along with the Spirit that wrote that book, that the Spirit is in me, it sticks out like a three-headed monster. See how easy it is? You are not going to confuse me about what the Bible says. You are going to confuse me on tongues. Do you know why? I have a book that bears witness with my Spirit.

Do you want to get to that same place? It is not something that God gave Bob Alexander. It is something that any man and woman can have if you are willing to get to know Him before you try to love Him. It comes from knowing what the book says and how the book will impact your life, that when you come to a point in your life, you are going to be, just face it, you are going to be confronted with all kinds of things out there. Somebody says, "Well, you should not judge." He that is spiritual judges all things. I am supposed to prove all things, the Bible says. The Bible says there are some people in Ephesians 4:14 that get blown about by every wind of doctrine. Everything they hear is what they believe, or when they hear it, they do not know what to do with it. So some slick little gal or some slick little guy can come in there and twist it and turn it around, and you do not even know what you are doing, so you fall for it. Do you know why? You do not have the ability to try the spirits. That is what you have got to do.

There is more to that Bible and learning it than just telling you what you cannot do in life. That book is your safety lamp. It is your traveler's lamp. It is your safety light. It shows you where the

pitfalls of bad doctrine and bad teaching and bad religions are, that it does not line up with the Spirit that wrote that book and the Spirit that is inside you. It is so easy. It is unbelievable.

## XI. The Trinity and Assurance of Salvation (1 John 5)

Then chapter 5, and we are done. Chapter 5 is one of the great chapters in all the Bible that shows the Trinity.

*1 John 5:7*

*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*

You might know that it is John's book because John, I told you this, that the foundation, the fundamental concept of all Bible Christianity is based on God and who God is, and God is a Trinity. So it does not strike me, and I will tell you what, in the Gospel of John, it tells you that Jesus and God are one too. But here it is undeniable.

*John 1:1*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

*John 1:14*

*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

So there is the clearest verse in the Bible that tells you that God is a Trinity. There is no other place that you can go that says it that exact. Do you know the devil hates that? That is why every new Bible in the market takes out that verse and says it should not be in your Bible. You go to an NIV, you would go down to that verse and it would be a little note in there and says that that verse should not be in your Bible, and it is out. Do you know why it is out? Because the devil does not want you to believe in the Trinity, that is why.

There is only one set of manuscripts in the history of the world that ever had 1 John 5:7 in it, and there is a line out of Antioch that your King James Bible comes from. Do you know why the Roman Catholic Church and all those groups back there hated those Waldensians, Albigensians? One of the reasons is because they had an old Latin and an old Syriac that had 1 John 5:7 in it. But you have got to get that so you can try the spirits. It is the greatest verse in the Bible. Now if you give that verse to somebody and somebody rejected that, you have got somebody that sees the Spirit in you, the Spirit in the Word of God, puts the two together, and they say, "No thanks." Why would you even mess with that? In your most basic form, you have just got a lesson in how to try the spirits. That spirit in that person is not lining up with the clearest verse in the Bible that our kids over in the elementary could get down.

Then lastly, 1 John 5:11-13. Three of the greatest verses in all of the Bible that says when you can know for sure you are saved. This is where your fellowship leads you to. I told you, your fellowship is based on your joy and your time in the Word of God, and through that fellowship,

you get the victory. You get the victory because you know you have got the joy down in your heart, and you know that this whole thing is temporary, and from that you know that no matter how bad it gets in this life, you have one thing that the rest of the world does not have: that you know absolutely beyond any shadow of a doubt if you die right now, you are going to heaven.

Just as 1 John 5:7 was the greatest verse on the Trinity, here is the greatest verse in all of the Bible that you can know for sure you are saved.

*1 John 5:11-13*

*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*

*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*

*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

Very simple. Verse 11 says you have got a record. I do not know of anything in this world that you buy that you do not get a record of. You go down to buy gas, you get a receipt, that is your record. You go to Walmart, you buy something, you get a receipt, that is your record. You pay your taxes, you get a receipt, that is your tax receipt. You have got to have it to get your license plates. You have everything in life. You get born, you have got a birth certificate, that is your record. I do not know of anything at all. If you lose your birth certificate, you cannot do anything in life. You can go to college someplace, and everyone will say, "Let me see your birth certificate." You will get a job, they are going to say, "I want to see your birth certificate." The fact that you are standing there and saying, "I do not have it, but here is proof that I am born, that I am here," does not cut it without them. They want to see the record. The record is important.

For you, a New Testament born again child of God, God knew how important it was that you knew for sure you are saved, so God gave you a new birth certificate: the Word of God. It is your record through your fellowship, through knowing Him, through the joy that you can know in your heart. That is why He says these things in verse 13, "I have written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

This is why when I talk to people about the Lord, I do not ask you if you are saved. That is a waste of time. I do not ask you, "Have you ever been born again?" I do not ever ask you if you had an experience with Christ. Waste of time. I do not ask if you have been baptized. I do not ask you where you go to church. I do not care. Those things are an absolute waste of time. The issue is, if you die right now, do you know in your heart without any question you would go to heaven? That is the issue. I have a book that says you can. That is it.

When you go through the trials and the tribulations of life, God gets you through that tribulation by giving you the victory. The victory is based on your fellowship, knowing God. The fellowship produces the joy that you do not care that they are going to cut my legs off and kill me this afternoon. How do you think that those Christians back in the Dark Ages, to the tune of sixty million of them, got butchered and killed by the false religions that wanted them to deny Christ?

How do you think they got through the oppression? I know we cannot understand that. The biggest struggle we go through today is, "Oh, honey, the air conditioner broke, we all had to sweat today, it was tough." "Oh, honey, it was a rough day at work, what happened? All the computers were down, we all had to think, oh, it was a terrible thing." Those are the struggles we go through. I am talking about paying for what you believe with your life. Only one thing gets you through that kind of stuff: walking in the light as He is in the light. That is all based on knowing Him, and knowing Him produces the fellowship, and the fellowship produces the joy, and the joy produces the "do what you have got to do."

There are story after story after story of those old men and women that died and paid the price, that they burned them at the stake. The old inquisitors were waiting for them to scream out in mercy, and they are in there singing, "I got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart." I am telling you. They burned old John Hus at the stake one time, and the old pope, the old inquisitor, came over and he said, "John Hus," he says, "I am going to separate you from the church militant," meaning he was going to kill him. John looks back and says, "You go ahead and separate me from the church militant, but you will never separate me from the church triumphant. Can I help you light the match?" Incredible. Do you know why? They had the fellowship. The fellowship produced the joy. They had the assurance. They knew how to try the spirits, and they knew more about God because they knew Him. They really loved Him because they knew Him. All based on the Bible and learning the Bible. When you get to that point in your life, God shows you through this old lamp, this old light, He shows you how you have the assurance to know if you die right now, you are going to be with Him.