



Reflections from 1 John

By Dave Quinn

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About this booklet

Reflections from 1 John is a collection of thoughts from my daily blog at The PASSION Blog (www.passionaustralia.org/blog).

They are quick thoughts that have grown out of my morning devotions and my prayerful reading of the Bible.

They are not meant to be deeply theological but to provide a connection between faith, life and the Bible.

I hope you enjoy these short devotions or “blog posts”. For longer articles and sermons please visit my main website.

God Bless,



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Seen and Heard

Reading: 1 John 1:1-4

Over the last few weeks I have been reading over 1 John. It is one of those times where I feel God speaking to me as I read.

He is drawing things to my attention that I am meditating on and trying to apply to my life. I have finished the books several times only to go back to the beginning again.

One thing I really noticed at the start of 1 John is the phrase “seen and heard”. John uses it several times in the start of chapter one. He is saying we have seen and heard Jesus ourselves and touched Him in the flesh.

He wants us to know he is an eye witness and he knows who Jesus is. He knows He is the Christ, the Messiah, and the Son of God. He knows He is eternal and there from the beginning.

John also wanted his readers to know these things so they would have fellowship together and that their joy may be complete. We see this in verses 3 & 4...

“We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy”.

Here are some questions for reflection and application:

What have you seen and heard about Christ in the pages of the Bible that you could tell others about?

What things could you share that would help others to find fellowship with the Father and the Son?

God Bless,
Dave

Living in the light

In 1 John 1:5-10 there is a section titled “Living in the light”. Today I read from the NLT and several verses jumped out at me.

The first was verse 6 – So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth.

At the time of writing false teachers had infiltrated the church and John was partly writing to address that.

The various false teachers taught that the physical body was evil and they took one of two approaches.

1. Live in strict discipline to deny the body and hence defeat evil, or
2. Give in to it and live a life of lust. They reasoned that since the body was evil you can give in to it. This approach was popular to many.

The problem was that we can't live in the light if we are walking in darkness at the same time. If we do we are not walking with God and practicing the truth.

John goes on to share a truth that helps us to live in the light – confession. Verse 9 tells us that if we confess our sin God is faithful and will forgive and purify us.

I long to live right before God and walk in the truth. But there are times when I fail in word, thought or deed. Rather than beat myself up, I simply go to God, confess and ask forgiveness.

Sometimes I feel a huge flood of relief in my soul knowing I am forgiven. Other times I don't really feel anything but I know from His Word that I am forgiven and purified.

When I do this I know I am free and I can walk in the light with God. I know my sin is covered by Jesus' blood and I am in fellowship with Him.

Here are some questions for personal reflection and application:

What are some of the ways you used to walk in darkness and you no longer do?
(This is to show God's work in your life)

What are some of the habits and patterns you fall into now that may need confessing to God? (This is to keep you walking in the light)

God Bless,
Dave

We have an Advocate

I am continuing my devotions in 1 John this week. Today I read 1 John 2:1-6 NLT. Verse one sets the scene...

My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.

My heart as a Christian is to live in Christ and not sin, but as I said yesterday, sometimes I do fall short and I need to confess.

It helps me to know that I have an Advocate, a Defender, and a Supporter in heaven who pleads my case on my behalf.

It helps me to know that when I let myself down and ultimately let God down, that He is there for me.

Over the years I have wondered what Jesus says in my defence. We can never know, but it might be something like this...

Father, Dave loves Me and I love Him. He knows Me and I know him. He tries really hard to live in Me and he does really well most of the time, but sometimes he falls short. Father, I died on the cross for Dave's sin. I took it on Myself. I paid the price. Dave is forgiven because of My efforts on his behalf.

We can never really know what is said, but it helps me to imagine something like the above. It helps me to know the One who is truly righteous is on my side.

Here are some questions for personal reflection and application:

Do you find it hard to confess your sin when you fall short? Does it take some time to approach God?

Does it help you to know Jesus is your advocate, defender and supporter in heaven?

God Bless,
Dave

A new and an old commandment

In today's reading from 1 John I looked at 1 John 2:7-11 NLT. The title of this section is A New Commandment.

The first verse sets the scene again...

Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather it is an old one you have had from the very beginning. This old commandment—to love one another—is the same message you heard before.

I like the old/new commandment idea to love one another. John reminds us that God has always wanted us to love on another.

This goes back to Leviticus 19:18 where God says, "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD".

Jesus also gave us this command in John 13:34-35, "So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

John reminds us the importance of loving one another. In the last section we saw that living in the light meant to follow God's commands. In today's section it shows that by loving our Christian brothers and sisters we walk in the light and we even make the darkness disappear!

So let us purpose in our hearts today to love one another. Let us love one another the way Jesus loved us. Let us also think of ways we can do this practically.

Here are some questions for personal reflection and application:

Since coming to know Christ, do you find it is easier to love others? Has your love for others grown the longer you walk with Christ?

What are some practical ways you can show your love for others today?

God Bless,
Dave

Do not love the world

Today's reading comes from 1 John 2:15-17 NLT. The title is, "Do not love this world".

Verse 15 says, "Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you".

This is a strong statement about loving the world that we live in. At the heart of this verse is a reminder that this world is not all there is – it is not our eternal home – it is only temporary.

Verse 17 reminds us that this world has a use by date. It says, "And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave...".

In a sense verse 16 has bookends. Verse 15 says do not love this world and verse 17 reminds us to remember it is passing away. A day will come when God calls time.

In the meantime we live in this world as God's children and live in light of eternity. We live as members of God's eternal Kingdom and seek to serve Him in all we do.

We cannot get caught up in the shallow things of this world. The things of verse 16 – a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions.

John reminds us that these are not from the Father, but are from this world. So let us keep our hearts and minds focussed on God and His eternal realities and live in light of our awaiting eternal home.

Here are some questions for personal reflection and application:

Do you find it easy to get caught up in the things of this world mentioned in verse 16?

Does knowing this world has a use by date help you to keep your mind on this above? (Colossians 3:1-2)

God Bless,
Dave

A warning against antichrists

In today's passage the title is a warning against antichrists. This is found in 1 John 2:18-29 NLT.

In verse 18 it uses the term antichrist twice. One is used with a capital A and one with a lower case a. The lower case version is referring to false teachers that infiltrated the church and the capital A is about the Antichrist who is talked about in Revelation 13, 19:20, and 20:10.

In verse 26 we see that John is writing this section to warn against being led astray by these false teachers. As we have seen before they would deny key things about Christ's being the Messiah and how we should live.

John says there are two keys to help us from being led astray. The first is to remember we have the Holy Spirit as our helper and teacher. In verse 27 he says, "But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true".

The second is to remember the foundation teachings they were taught. That Christ is from the Father in heaven, that He is eternal, that He is the promised Messiah and He is the only way to find salvation.

This is why it is so important for us as Christ followers to walk closely with Him, to pray, to study our Bibles and to rely on the Holy Spirit's teaching and promptings. When we do this we can stand firm in Christ.

Here are some questions for personal reflection and application:

Have you had a time when you have been led astray by false teachings? What did you do?

What things have you got in place now to minimise the chances of being led astray?

God Bless,
Dave

Living as God's children

The next devotion comes from 1 John 3:1-10. It is all about how we should live as God's children.

Verse 1 says "See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!..." We are reminded that God loves us and we are His children when we come to Christ. We are adopted into His eternal family, now and forever.

In verse 2 it tells us that we will be like Christ when He appears and in verse 3 were are reminded also to live a life of purity because Christ is pure.

John emphasised this point because false teachers were telling the people they could live how they wanted because the flesh was evil and it would be destroyed. They believed you could still be spiritual and live a sinful life.

John strongly condemns this thinking in verses 4-6...

"Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God. And you know that Jesus came to take away our sins, and there is no sin in him. Anyone who continues to live in him will not sin. But anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is".

As we have seen in previous chapters we all sin at times as Christians. When we do, we confess and we are forgiven. Our Advocate in heaven represents us before the Father.

Someone who continues in sin, as the passage talks about, is someone who is not sorry for sin and has no desire for forgiveness and change. They don't realise that living right is an important part of living as God's children.

John tells us that these people really belong to the devil and don't really know God (v10).

Here are some questions for personal reflection and application:

Have there been times when you have continued to live in sin and not sought God's forgiveness?

Do you understand that it is important to live right as we wait for Christ to return?

God Bless,
Dave

Keep on loving one another

In today's reading 1 John 3:11-24, John encourages us to keep loving one another. This is the second time in this book that he has spoken about loving each other.

John again reminds us that this "is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another" (v11). He goes on to say that our love for one another shows we have passed from death to life (v14).

So how does this love show itself? Verse 18 tells us, "Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions". It is not enough to love in word only, actions must follow.

We see in verse 16 that we learned what love is by Jesus giving Himself for us and that as Christians we should give ourselves for our brothers and sisters too.

Verse 17 gives us a simple practical way of showing our love – helping a brother or sister in need. Those with much should help those with little. It asks the question if we don't help, how God's love can be in us.

This section closes with the commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another (v23). If we do these things we remain in fellowship with Christ.

Here are some questions for personal reflection and application:

Do you find it easy to love your brothers and sisters in Christ in words only?

What are some practical things you can do to show your love?

God Bless,
Dave

Discerning false prophets

In today's reading from 1 John 4 it talks about discerning or testing false prophets. The first verse again sets the scene...

"Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world".

It is important for us as Christians to not just believe everything we hear. Even if the person claims to be a prophet and to have heard from God, we must prayerfully weigh up what they say.

Some tests we could prayerfully include are –

1. Does it line up with other things God talks about in the Bible
2. Does the person's lifestyle match their talk
3. Have other things they have prophesied in the past been right

Another big key is how they view Jesus. Verse 2 says...

"This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God".

Many false prophets deny Christ came in a human body. While others claim he is not eternal and He is a created being and angel. Some say when He was raised from the dead it was in spirit only.

Testing what is said against the above points and then testing their belief in who Jesus really is will help us to determine if what someone says is really from God. Often though, time is the ultimate test.

Here are some questions for personal reflection and application:

Has there been a time where you were not sure if what a prophet said was from God or not? What did you do?

What things have you got in place to test false prophets?

God Bless,
Dave

Love one another again

Today I am up to 1 John 4:7-18 in my devotions. John is again talking about loving one another.

This is the third time in his letter that he touches on this idea. I am starting to think that loving one another is a big part of the Christian life!

Verses 7 says, "Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God".

Verse 11 reminds us that "since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other".

As Christians, Jesus is our example of what it means to love. Everything he did in His life and His death was loving and for our benefit.

I have found that the longer I follow Jesus and the more I am changed into His likeness (Romans 8:29), love comes more naturally to me.

In verse 17a we are reminded that this is how it is meant to be when it says, "And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect".

Here are some questions for personal reflection and application:

Why do you think John had to mention loving one another three times in a short letter of five chapters?

Is your love growing more perfect the longer you walk with Jesus and live in Him?

God Bless,
Dave

Faith in the Son of God

In my next post from 1 John we are looking at 1 John 5:1-12. This section is titled, "Faith in the Son of God" in the NLT.

Verse 1 says, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too".

There are two main thoughts in this verse -

1. When we come to Christ we become God's children. We are adopted into His eternal family.

2. Since we love the Father, we also love His children too. This means we will love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Both of these ideas have already been mentioned in 1 John already. Both are vital to living fully for God – loving God and loving each other.

The final two verses in this passage give us another reassuring truth about salvation and adoption. Verses 11 and 12 say...

"And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life".

Eternal life is found in Christ. If we trust Jesus for our salvation, then eternal life is a present reality. It is not something we have to wait for, we have it now!

Here are some questions for personal reflection and application:

Because of your faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, do you understand that you are adopted as His child?

How does knowing your "eternal life" has already started change the way you think and live today?

God Bless,
Dave

What I learned from 1 John

I have really enjoyed reading 1 John over the last month or so. I read through it one chapter a day and then went back to the start again a number of times.

As I read I just felt the Holy Spirit prompting me to see certain things that I needed to be reminded of or perhaps hadn't seen before. It was really enjoyable just to meditate on it afresh.

Today I thought I would share a few of the things that are still fresh in my mind. Most of them are in the previous posts from the last few weeks.

1. Seen and heard – John simply wanted the people to understand the things he had seen and heard as a close companion and eye witness of Jesus. John wanted the readers to know so they could experience fellowship with them.

2. Living as God's children – this was a key thought that jumped out at me. It is really important to follow God's commands and live out a real and intimate relationship with Jesus. People will be drawn to or repelled from the Jesus they see in you and I.

3. Don't be deceived – John talked a lot about false teachers and antichrists that would deceive and draw people away from the truth. It reminded me how important it is to know what the Bible says for yourself.

4. Loving one another – John constantly talked about loving one another and how important it is to living in the Kingdom. He included three major sections about this idea in five chapters of his letter. This really reiterated the importance of it to me.

5. Real life is in Christ – The last one that from chapter five is that real life is found in Christ. 1 John 5:11 says, "And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son".

As I said I really enjoyed 1 John and the fresh meditations it brought. I think I might put the reflections in a booklet for download.

God Bless,
Dave