

Introduction

After Nathan asked me to preach, I began thinking about which Scripture to preach from. The first book that I considered was 1 John. I love the letter of 1 John because it played an instrumental part in drawing me toward God and awakening my spirit.

It was during a fall getaway in 1992 while I was a student at UNI. The weekend was sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ. During the weekend we were assigned to have personal devotion times. We were to read 1 John, take notes, pray, and memorize verses. This was something I had never EVER done before in my life. Up until this point in my life I believed I was a Christian. My family went to church regularly. I believed all the Bible stories. I knew Jesus died on the cross. He rose again. But it didn't make any difference in my life. Christianity did not penetrate beyond my mind.

Weeks before I was given an NIV Bible. I did have a King James Bible which was given to me as a confirmation gift by my parents. I had no idea there were other versions of the Bible. Because, you were not supposed to understand things written in the HOLY BIBLE. So, I had with me my brand-new paper back modern translation of the Bible. On Saturday morning we were all sent out to find a solitary place at the Bible camp and have devotion time. I sat down on a bench facing the lake; I had to locate 1 John. (Thank God for the index.) And I started reading. I was really surprised that I could understand what I was reading. It was as though the letter was written to me, personally. I began underlining things. I recognized a verse or two I had heard before from my church background. We were only assigned to read chapter 1, but couldn't stop there. I read to the end. I kept underlining things.

The more I read, the more I realized that I wasn't a Christian at all. I was not a child of God. I was in love with the world. I did not obey God. I walked in darkness. I did not love others. I did not love God. I loved myself. I had lived a lie.

Prayer for me up to that time was reciting memorized prayers at meals and bed times. The very last day of the weekend getaway, I tried something crazy. I invented it myself. I... talked to God. As if He were a real person. I said, "God, I think you can hear me and I think you might be speaking to me. Can you let me know if you are real?" I looked straight up into the sky. Because, where else are you supposed to look? And directly above me was an eagle soaring in circles, like hovering up there. At that point, like never before, I knew that God was real. That He cared about me.

Amazing things can happen when you read the Word of God and pray.

1 John background

- **Author:** John – written anonymously
- **Audience:** “little children” written to gentile believers
- **Date written:** 85-95
- **Where:** Ephesus
- **Why:**
 - To refute false teachers – demonic counterfeits
 - To encourage believers to a life of fellowship
 - To assure believers about their salvation

John

- **Father:** Zebedee
- **Mother:** Salome
- **Brother:** James
- **Cousin:** Jesus
- **Hometown:** Bethsaida of Galilee (Same town of Peter and Andrew)
- **Work:** Fisherman – was in business with Peter
- **Family:** Salome and Mary were sisters
- **Ministry:**
 - A disciple of John the Baptist
 - Became a disciple of Jesus
 - Member of Christ’s inner circle (one of three)

1 John 3:24-4:6 Knowing God’s Spirit Indwells Us

(Read 3:24) If we obey God’s commands, this is a sign that His spirit lives in us. To begin with, we need to understand ourselves. What makes us unique? What does it mean that God created us in His image? Who are we? We have a Spirit, a soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23). The body is easy to understand. We can see it. It is physical. We see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. Our soul is psychological. It consists of our mind, will, and emotions. It is what we use to relate to other people. Yet there is something even more unique about us. We are able to relate to God and we do this by our spirit. Our spirit works in us

to understand, be sensitive to, and be aware of God's existence and Him interacting with us (Rom. 8:16).

(Read 4:1) The Spirit of God must be discerned from false spirits. "because there are many false prophets (spirits) in the world." The Bible uses several different words to describe demonic beings. Such as: deceiving spirits, demons, other spirits, false prophets, false gods, rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world, spiritual forces of evil, antichrists; to name a few.

(Read 4:2-3) How do you know who is speaking to you? Is it a message from God? Or from Satan? The way to know is the spirit's attitude toward Jesus. Does the spirit proclaim Jesus as the Son of God, born in the flesh, lived here on earth, died on the cross, and was raised alive three days later? If so, it is a Spirit of God. False spirits will not claim this about Jesus.

How do you distinguish an apple tree from a pear tree? Or a cherry tree from a plum tree? The easiest way to know which is which, is by its fruit. We have a lot of fruit trees on our property. When we bought the house, we saw fruit on some of the trees – so I could identify those trees. But other trees bear fruit at a different time. There are still some trees I have no idea what they are. Because they have not produced any fruit.

God's Spirit is a spirit that produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). These are indicators that God is speaking. In the same way, we can tell who is a true Christian and who is showing evidence that he is not.

(Read 4:4-6) Do you ever become frustrated with certain people? Nothing they say makes sense. They believe things you know are lies. You speak truth to them and they won't believe it. They just carry on with their life of lies and hang out with other people who believe the same. "They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them."

Yet, you can meet other people and they are a breath of fresh air. The words they speak are true and honest. They are not fake people. You can have fellowship with them and it does not drain all your energy. After spending time with them, you are happier. We enjoy listening to one another. "By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

The following are a list of ways God speaks to us by His Spirit.

1. **Inner Knowing** (Rom. 8:16; 9:1) Knowing in your spirit that something is true. Like confirming deep within you – having enough evidence. A strong awareness.
 - a. For example:
 - i. Knowing who to marry
 - ii. Knowing that you're saved
 - iii. Knowing, that you know
 - iv. Understanding Scripture
 - v. Knowing when to take a step of faith
 1. Like a new job
 2. Whether to move, buy a house

Sometimes a word or phrase will jump out at you and get your attention. From the Bible, a sermon, or a song. The timing is always perfect. Just what you needed to hear.

2. **Inner Prompting or Leading** (Rom. 8:14) God will prompt you to do something specific. Some people respond by gentle nudging. Others, like me, it takes bricks thrown from heaven. ***When God is not leading you in a certain direction, you will not experience peace.***
3. **Being Checked – An Urge to Stop** (Acts 16:6-7) The Holy Spirit will warn you of coming danger.
 - a. Warning to be careful, take precautions
 - b. Warning to stop and not do something you are about to do.

Sometimes this comes through your wife. "Honey!?! Do you think this is a good idea? Have you thought this through?" Don't ignore these inner warnings. Your life can depend on it. ***At times you will get an uneasy sense; your stomach can tighten, your nerves become tense.***

"...greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world." We all know how this ends. GOD WINS!! However, what happens in the mean time? We still live in the realm of our enemy Satan. We are at war. Now is not a time of peace. So, we put on the armor of God.

The shield is a piece of armor that protects. Known as the shield of faith. The shield is what is taking all the blows “the flaming darts of the evil one”. It is the piece of armor that Satan attacks. Our faith. Our faith can become weak.

(Read handout: Signs you are Under Spiritual Attack)

Satan is the Father of Lies. Here is just a few of them. Lies we might believe.

1. God is not really good. If He were, He would not allow bad things to happen.
2. God is not really enough. We never admit this lie. But the way we live reveals we believe it.
3. Physical beauty matters more than inner beauty.
4. I can sin and get away with it.
5. My sin isn't really that bad.

(Read handout: What to do When Experiencing Spiritual Warfare)

Has an evil thought ever entered your mind? Who do you think put that thought there? We usually believe that we created the thought. But it is the Father of Lies who puts those thoughts there in your mind. Thoughts, images, and suggestions

(example)

After that weekend God kept drawing me closer and closer to Himself. It is clearer to see in hindsight. But I can't put an exact date or moment when I was saved. It was a process during a period of several months. I kept reading the Bible more and more. I'm still in process. I must keep believing. Day after day. Yet surrendering control of my life and giving it to God for Him to guide and direct is not an easy thing to do. But it is simple. It is humble.

(kneel)