



The Basis For Our Joy (1 John 1:1-4)

I. INTRO

- A. Very early in my Christian experience I had a life-changing interaction.
 - 1. There was a man in the first church I attended who actively mentored young men.
 - 2. He and I were spending time together one day and he asked me how I was doing.
 - 3. In response to his question I said, "I'm doing okay -- under the circumstances." He then asked me a **life-altering question**: "What are you doing under there?"
- B. Let me ask you two questions:
 - 1. What percentage of your life is lived UNDERNEATH your circumstances?
 - 2. What would it look like for you to live ABOVE (or beyond) your circumstances?
- C. That is precisely what the 1 John is about. Today we will be looking at 1:1-4, which is the prologue. There are no salutations or introduction to John's letter. He jumps right in because he has some very important things to say...
- D. John's writing is more indirect and reflective in its approach (written about 60 years after the resurrection). (Grandpa Pastor John)
 - 1. It is important to realize that John has had multiple decades to reflect on his relationship with Jesus and the launching of the Church.
 - 2. John makes more frequent use of symbolism and double meanings.
 - 3. While this letter is intended to be VERY practical, yet, as we'll see, it is full of theological substance.
- E. I will read 1 John 1:1-4, then pray, and we will consider what we can learn about living ABOVE our circumstances: *"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—² and the life was*

manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—³ what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.” --1 John 1:1-4

II. BODY

- A. To break down these verses in a way to (hopefully) help us to understand them correctly I will use the metaphor of a fruit-bearing tree (or plant), which has three basic parts: **Root → Shoot → Fruit**. Just in case you missed that day in biology, here’s what it looks like:

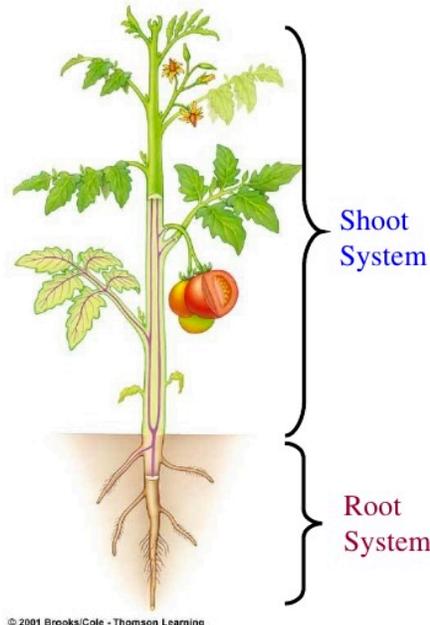
Shoot and Root Systems

Shoot system

- produces sugars by photosynthesis
- carries out reproduction

Root system

- anchors the plant
- penetrates the soil and absorbs water and minerals
- stores food



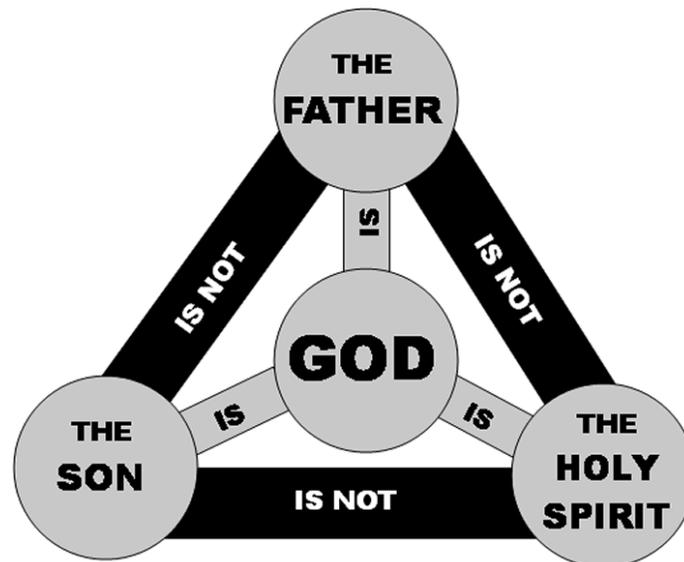
- B. Here is how we can think about the first four verses in John’s letter:

1. **The Root: Jesus eternally existed within the Trinity and then humbled Himself and became a man (vs. 1-2).**
2. **The Shoot: Because of the *life* Jesus lived we now have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus, which becomes the basis of our fellowship with one another (v. 3).**
3. **The Fruit: That our joy may be made complete (v. 4).**

- C. Let’s look at them one at a time...

1. **The Root: Jesus eternally existed within the Trinity and then humbled Himself and became a man (vs. 1-2).**

- a. In the opening line of 1 John are the words: *“What was from the beginning...”* --1 John 1:1
- 1) We see something similar in John’s Gospel 1:1: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* --John 1:1 which is a reference to Jesus (see John 1:14).
 - 2) These are BOTH references to the opening line of Genesis: *“In the beginning God...”* --Genesis 1:1
 - 3) What John is saying is that **Jesus is God** and he is tying Jesus to the Creation account and identifying Jesus as a member of the pre-existent Trinity.
 - 4) John’s use of the phrase *Word of Life* at the end of 1 John 1:1 is also a reference to Creation and the pre-existent Trinity.
- b. There are (at least) two essential doctrines that provide the **root system** for the Christian faith: 1) The Trinity, and 2) Incarnation...
- 1) Jesus, the *Word of Life* (v.1), has eternally existed within the Trinity.



- a) Trinity is the doctrine that God exists as a unity of three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each of

- the persons is distinct from the other yet identical in essence.
- b) As many of you know the word *Trinity* is not used in the Bible, yet the evidence (or doctrine) is clearly present.
 - c) Augustine, who spent 19 years (400-419) studying the Trinity and writing a definitive work entitled, *On The Trinity*. He said, "If you deny the Trinity you lose your soul, and if you try to explain the Trinity you lose your mind." --Augustine
 - d) The concept of the Trinity is seen first in Genesis 1:26: "*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.*" --Genesis 1:26
 - e) The Trinity was further explained by Jesus Himself in the Great Commission...
 - i. "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in **the name** of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*" -- Matthew 28:19-20 (emphasis added)
 - ii. Jesus defines the parameters of the Trinity and indicates that there is **one name** that encompasses the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
 - f) "Each of the divine persons centers upon the others. None demands that the others revolve around him. Each voluntarily circles the other two, pouring love, delight, and adoration into them. Each person of the Trinity loves, adores, defers to, and rejoices in the others. That creates a dynamic, pulsating dance of joy and love. The early leaders of the Greek church had a word for this – *perichoresis*. Notice [the root of] our word "choreography" within it. It means literally to "dance or flow around" --Tim Keller¹ [we've been

¹ *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*: 215.

invited into the dance as we become “*partakers of the divine nature*” –2 Peter 1:4]

2) Jesus, the *Word of Life*, humbled Himself and became flesh “*and the life was manifested...*” (v.2)

a) The Doctrine of Incarnation – Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human.

b) Jesus is **not** half God and half man. He is fully divine and fully man with two distinct natures.

c. Trinity and Incarnation belong together. The doctrine of the Trinity declares that the man Jesus is truly divine; that of the Incarnation declares that the divine Jesus is truly human. Together they proclaim the full reality of the Savior whom the New Testament sets forth, the Son who came from the Father’s side at the Father’s will to become the sinner’s substitute on the cross. –J.I. Packer

2. The Shoot: Because of the *life* Jesus lived we now have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus, which becomes the basis of our fellowship with one another (v. 3).

a. The last part of 1 John 1:3 says, “*Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*” --1 John 1:3c

b. To say we have fellowship with the Father and with Jesus means that we have come to share their values. We believe what they believe and love what they love. We delight to spend time together. We join the dance. (Christian meditation)

c. The biblical word *fellowship* (Greek: *koinonia*) means intentionally moving toward a deep communing, a holy alliance of love one for another; it is shared life (in *community*) with others who have a passion for Jesus, the Son of God. [ours is modeled after the Trinity]

d. My own definition of *fellowship* is To break off a piece of yourself (the real you) and share it – embracing authenticity in a world more comfortable with an “image-is-everything” mentality.

e. “*But if we [really] are living and walking in the Light as He [Himself] is in the Light, we have [true, unbroken] fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses (removes)*

us from all sin and guilt – keeps us cleansed from sin in all its forms and manifestations.” --1 John 1:7 (Amplified Bible)

3. **The Fruit: That our joy may be made complete (v. 4).**

- a. John does not tell us in this letter that we should attempt to reform or improve the world. In fact we learned last week that will not happen. *“We know that...the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”* --1 John 5:19
- b. John is teaching us in this letter that we do not have to live beneath our circumstances – that, because of what Jesus has accomplished, we can rise above them.
- c. How do we define joy? There are no pithy one-liners that can define and describe joy made complete. Paul took a whole chapter in 1 Corinthians 13 to define love. John does something similar here in 1 John...
- d. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in his commentary on 1 John suggests that the first three chapters identify the conditions, which are essential for joy to be obtained and remain in us.² I grabbed one of my Bibles and looked through the chapter headings and sub-headings and this is what I found:
 - 1) Walk in the light – 1:5-2:14 (community, humility, vulnerability, and confession)
 - 2) Do not love the world – 2:15-17
 - 3) Know what you believe -- 2:18-27 (don't get sucked into false teaching – antichrists)
 - 4) Fight for joy – 2:28-3:10
 - 5) Love one another – 3:11-24
- e. Over the last several months we have been reaffirming and rewriting our core values as a church. In one of the Summits we amassed lots of data and the TT, Staff, and Elders have been reshaping what is distinctive about KHC. Here's is what they came up with – the first (of four) Core Values: [At KHC we about] CULTIVATING a passionate relationship with God by glorifying God, enjoying God, and treasuring Jesus Christ above all else. [Do you want joy? Cultivate a passionate relationship with God...]

² *Life In Christ: Studies in 1 John: 34.*

III. CONCLUSION

A. To review, we have the root, the shoot, and the fruit...

1. **The root consists of the foundational doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation.**
2. **The shoot is access to a deep and abiding fellowship with God the Father, Jesus Christ – and one another (joining the dance).**
3. **The fruit is a joyful living above our circumstances. [But we must fight for it]**

B. As we wrap this up I'd like to come back to the idea of fighting for our joy. John Piper wrote a book entitled, *When I Don't Desire God: How To Fight For Joy*. Here is some of Piper's advice on how to pursue our joy in God...

1. Realize that authentic joy in God is ultimately a gift from God – ask for it.
2. Realize that joy must be fought for relentlessly.
3. Resolve to attack all known sin in your life.
4. Realize that the battle is primarily a fight to see God for who He is.
5. Learn to sit quietly and meditate on the Word of God – we don't empty our minds, we fill our minds.
6. Pray earnestly and continually for open heart-eyes and an inclination for God.
7. Learn to preach the gospel to yourself rather than listen to yourself.
8. Spend time with God-saturated people who help you see God and fight the fight.
9. Be patient in the night of God's seeming absence.
10. Get the rest, exercise, and proper diet that your body was designed by God to have.
11. Appreciate God's revelation in nature.
12. Read great books about God and biographies of great saints.
13. Do the hard and loving thing for the sake of others (witness and mercy).
14. Get a global vision for the cause of Christ and pour yourself out for the unreached.