

How to Grow Closer to Jesus

Message Notes

About the epistle:

- Written by John, the disciple of Jesus.
- The only one of the twelve who did not suffer martyrdom but died an old man from natural causes. Not because he compromised, though! History says they tried to boil him in oil and tried to behead him but it didn't work... Then they exiled him on the tiny Greek island of Pathmos - where he received the entire book of Revelation... You just can't keep a man of God down!
- John also wrote a Gospel, where he constantly referred to himself as 'the disciple that Jesus loved'. He didn't suggest that Jesus didn't love the other eleven, but John has such a revelation of, and such a strong identity in the love of Jesus for him, that he even named himself 'loved by Jesus'. God wants to give you the same assurance, the same identity!
- In the same way, the epistle 1 John is soaked with the love of God. In its five chapters, John mentions love **46 times!**
- History tells us that in the last few years of John's life, as an old man, all he ever uttered was the phrase '**Love one another**'.
- This letter is as **Jesus centered** as it is love centered, and we are going to look at some of the keys that John gives us on **How to grow closer to Jesus** throughout life:

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1 John 1:1-3

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

- 'That...which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—**this we proclaim**'

In other words, the boldness to proclaim Jesus and the Gospel has little to do with a certain personality or unique social quality, but goes back to how much you have **heard, seen, looked at** and **touched** the person Jesus.

Acts 4:13

When they saw how bold Peter and John were, and noticed that they were unlearned men from among the people, they were amazed. But then they recognized them and remembered that they had been with Jesus.

Again, your relationship with, and closeness to Jesus, is what produces boldness and strength.

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So John gives us **four important** steps in growing a strong relationship with Jesus: **hear, see, look at and touch**. Let's go through them one by one:

1. 'Which we have HEARD'

Everything starts here!

Romans 10:14

And how can they believe in him whom they have not heard?

Life can **contain** many wonderful experiences, but can only be **built** on the **Word of God** (importance of BTS!)

So many Christians struggle with insecurities in their relationship with God, or wrong ideas about who He is and what His character is all about - because they haven't heard, studied, read, listened.

- I use an example from my own life, growing up in a religious environment and having all kinds of crazy ideas about God - because I hadn't HEARD the Good News. Therefore, even though I believed God existed, I didn't have any stability in my relationship with Him.

The **hearing** - the information, the knowledge, the insight about God and who he is - is absolutely necessary. However, it's not sufficient. The next step in growing closer to Jesus is:

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2. 'Which we have SEEN with our eyes'

What you **hear** gives you **knowledge** - what you **see** gives you a **person**.

Job 42:5

Before I had HEARD of you, but now I have SEEN you with my own eyes. Please note: both hearing and seeing is absolutely necessary and complete one another.

Knowledge without a person is only theory.

Person without knowledge is shallow and unstable.

We HEAR when we read the Bible and listen to teaching, we SEE when we pray and praise. Note (1 John 1:1): not just 'see' but '**...with OUR eyes**'

Do you see Jesus **with your own eyes** - or do you see him with the eyes of others? Those of your parents, your wife or husband, your pastor or youth leader? The eyes of your past experiences?

If so, Jesus wants to give your own, inner eyes a **new, fresh picture** of who he is, how much he loves you, and what he wants for you today, in 2023!

Next step in growing closer to Jesus:

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3. 'Which we have LOOKED AT'

Why does John add 'looked at' when he already said 'seen'? Isn't that the same thing? No!

'**See**' can mean you see something because you happened to face a certain direction, something happened to take place in front of you. It doesn't necessarily mean you made an active choice.

'**Look at**' on the other hand, means to **actively fix your eyes upon something by choice**.

Greek original word translated 'look at' ('Thea-omai') appears only twice in the Bible - here and in John 1:14, '...and we saw his glory' - meaning 'we fixed our eyes on his glory'). Definition of the word from Strong's:

'To gaze upon, to observe something intently to grasp its significance, to concentrate on and allow something to significantly impact you'

In other words, the 'looking at' Jesus, involves a choice:

- a. You choose to look at Jesus, and at the same time...
- b. You choose NOT to look at other things that the devil and your flesh want you to look at (worldliness, impurity, pornography, things that celebrate what Jesus died to deliver you from)

1 John 1:6-7

If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we are lying and not acting according to the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

To 'look at' Jesus is about choosing him and opting out of other things - is about maturing to a place where you start to **pay a price for your faith**.

Many Christians feel they lack the fire of God - but many times it's because they have placed no sacrifice on their altar. The fire from heaven will only fall when a sacrifice has been made. Choose to **look at Jesus** today and pay whatever price you need to pay (friends, lifestyle, reputation...)

Last step in growing closer to Jesus (**though we grow by constantly repeating all four**) is:

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4. 'Which our hands have TOUCHED'

(Start to move towards ministry time from the beginning of the point)

Jesus doesn't just want to touch you. He wants you to touch Him.

Johannes himself was there when the resurrected Jesus said:

Luke 24:39

Look at my hands and my feet that it really is me. Touch me and see! A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see me have.

In the touch was the proof - he is alive, here and now. He is all I need!

In the dawn of creation, we read that God created all things by his word. He said, and it was. But when it was time for him to create his own image, man and women, you and me, he didn't use words to create us - **He used his touch. His own hands to form us. And ever since, in every human being, there is a burning desire for that touch** - to be touched by God and to be able to touch God in that personal, unique way that makes you able to call him 'my God'.

(I personally end with an example from when I was a kid and burned my hand, lost feeling for a few weeks. 'You might have lost your spiritual feeling, then God wants to heal that so you can touch him, feel him, experience his presence!') + general altar call for salvation