

The Word of Life

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Good morning. And also, Happy New Year. Happy 2024.! We made it one weekend, 51 to go.

! But yeah, some of us celebrated the New Year together.! We had Joe and Alex hosting a dinner at their place.! And also, some of us got together here on the 31st to count down, watch the fireworks. And not only did we celebrate the start of the New Year of 2024, we also celebrated Taylor Swift and the Backstreet Boys. We also celebrated Kelly's birthday. Her birthday is on the 1st, so happy belated birthday to Kelly.

And there may or may not have been a conga line. But yes, while we're looking forward to 2024, we also spent some time pausing to reflect back on last year, on 2023, on what God has been doing. And to give thanks for his goodness to us this past year. Over dinner, we were sharing about some things that we're thankful for. And one really common thing, actually, was this church.

[1:08] We were thankful for this church to the point where we had to say, okay, no more talking about the gathering. You have to go be thankful for something else. But yeah, looking back on last year, I really am thankful for this church.

And for those who are new, yeah, I guess the church, it's new in a way, like the new year, where in September, we've joined together. We're at this new spot.

And I'm thankful for what God is doing.

And we started a new season and welcomed one another together and wanted to start with the end in mind. So we looked at revelation, starting with the end in mind, knowing where we're heading, that Jesus is coming back.

And with the end in mind, we need to have the end in mind to know what we're doing now. Where are we headed to know what we should do now? Then we also looked at our mission statement. Why we gather as a church?

[2:12] What are we doing here? Why are we gathering in the first place? What are all these seats for these couches? Why are we a church? And also leading up to Christmas, we focused on God becoming man, coming down to earth to give us love, hope, peace, joy.

And now to start off 2024, having the end in mind, now we want to start from the beginning, from the basics. Now that we know where we're heading, let's turn to the basics and foundations of our faith. What is it that unites us together? Why do we gather and love one another in the first place? And it's because John says, God first loved us. We're a spiritual family.

And as our mission statement says, we're bought by the blood of Christ. And we seek to know him and enjoy him until the day that he returns for good. Until the day he returns to good and more than that forever and ever into eternity.

So for the next several weeks and months, we're turning to first John, the book of first John. And first John is an epistle or in other words, a letter.

[3:22] And today we'll look at the first four verses and take a look at the purpose behind this letter. What does God intend to speak to us through this book?

And I'll start off by phrasing it like this. That first John was written so that we might know God. And more than that, more than just knowing God, but to know that we know God, to know with confidence that we know God, to have no doubt that we know God.

And so we're starting here from the basics to lay down the foundations of our faith or to strengthen it so that we might be a gathering who knows God and who knows with confidence, assurance that we know him and are his children so that we may enjoy him until the day he returns for good.

Okay. So the plan for today is to look at these, the first four verses of first John. We'll read that now. So yeah, let's stand together as we read the word of God from, from first John chapters one to four.

John chapter one. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the word of life.

[4 : 37] The life was made manifest and we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the father and was made manifest to us that we, which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you so that you too may have fellowship with us.

And indeed our fellowship is with the father and with his son, Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the word of God. You can take a seat.

So that's first John one to four, one, one to four. So yeah, as the name of the book suggests first John, John was likely written by a man who was called John.

Specifically, this is the apostle John. So someone who followed Jesus around for three years. And in those three years, Jesus saw Jesus in, John saw Jesus in public, preaching, healing the sick and casting out demons.

John also saw Jesus in private eating and sleeping and praying to the Lord. Jesus saw John also being arrested and then crucified on a cross where Jesus breathed his last breath.

[5 : 52] And John also raced to Jesus's tomb on the third day and found it empty because Jesus wasn't there anymore. John saw Jesus risen from the dead with his nail pierced hands and with, with the hole in his side.

And John saw Jesus ascend into heaven with the promise that he would return again. And this is the apostle John who wrote an account of what he saw and heard.

That's the gospel of John found in the, in the, in the Bible. So we have the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, which are an account of what Jesus did here on earth 2000 years ago in what is now modern day Israel.

So John wrote his gospel with a reason, the book of John. He tells us this reason in John chapter 20 verses 30 to 31, which says that now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book.

But these are written so that you might may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. See, John wants us to believe that Jesus is our savior and in doing so have life through him.

[7 : 00] John wants us to know Jesus. And so he wrote down what he witnessed of Jesus. And that was in his gospel. So different book, not John, not first John, which we're studying now, but the gospel of John.

Very confusing, but yeah. John has the same idea now in first John that we're looking at in the introduction of this letter. And John emphasizes in the first four verses that Jesus really is true.

He does this by saying that he, John is an eyewitness of Jesus and that his witness is credible.

Right. That Jesus really is the son of God who came in the flesh. And we can see that starting from verse one, that which was from the beginning, meaning Jesus.

Which we have, he says, which we have heard. In other words, we heard him and we have seen him with our own two eyes. This is his testimony.

We have looked upon him with our own hands, with our own two hands. We have touched him in the flesh. We have seen him. We testify to him. What we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you.

[8 : 04] See, John is adamant that he is a firsthand eyewitness of Jesus. This is not something he heard from someone else, but he's seen it for himself. God in the flesh.

And it's not just John himself who saw this, the apostle, but he says, we, we saw him. There's multiple witnesses and John is one of them. And now there's maybe some of you listen closely today with a question in their heads.

If you're familiar with, with Paul's letter, there's something missing in this introduction. Does anyone have a guess? What's missing here? Well, I've been saying this is John, the author, John's the author, but actually there's no author mentioned so far.

And other letters in the Bible start off by saying something like this, right? Paul or Peter, an apostle of Christ Jesus, introducing who wrote this letter.

But there's, there's nothing of this sort here. And I've been saying that God, that, that John wrote the fourth gospel and this letter, but it's not stated explicitly that this is John here.

[9 : 13] And I don't know if any of you are into critical biblical scholarship, but turns out there's some people recently who argue that John did not.

In fact, the apostle John did not in fact write these books. That's a recent trend recently that it was someone else writing this book, pretending to be him. And now I'm not super dogmatic that it's John himself who wrote this, the gospel of John and first John.

But I think there is really good evidence to believe that for three reasons. So reason number one is that early church tradition attributes these books, gospel of John and first John, this letter to, you guessed it, John, right?

Third century writers, Irenaeus, Dionysius, Tertullian, to name a few, claim that these books were written by the apostle John. And that's why these books are in our Bibles in the first place.

The church recognized these books as canonical, meaning that, that they are God's word and they should be part of our Bibles. And the church did this because they believe that they were written by an eyewitness, an apostle of Jesus, who is John and written by him under the authority of God.

[10 : 29] Reason number two is that the earliest manuscripts we have, the earliest writings that we have of John's letters, all of them carry John's name where we would expect it.

Similar to our English Bibles. They were called John and first John, like our English Bibles. And there's no early manuscript that doesn't carry John's name, aside from some fragments that are missing where they're meant to be.

And then reason number three, which I think is the most important reason, is that the Bible is pretty clear that if it is not the apostle John, the author is at least an eyewitness, an apostle of Jesus.

See, the author here is very adamant that he himself saw Jesus. He heard Jesus and touched Jesus and is testifying about this. And you need to jump through some hoops or do some mental gymnastics to reach a different conclusion from this letter.

And if we flip to the end of John's gospel, in John chapter 21, verse 20, we see similar thing.

Mention of the disciple who loved Jesus, who himself at the last supper, leaned back against Jesus for his crucifixion and asked Jesus, Lord, who's it going to betray you?

[11 : 43] So the John who wrote the gospel was with Jesus before his death. And in verse 24, it says that this same disciple is the one who's bearing witness about these things, who has written these things.

And we know that his testimony is true. So if you take God at his word, then the author of John's gospel was this disciple at Jesus's side.

And the author of 1 John was someone who has seen and touched Jesus for himself. And now why do I bring this up? So who cares about some academic debate? I think reason three is very important.

Because no one debating the authorship of John is arguing that some other apostle saw him. Some other apostle wrote it or some other eyewitness. So no scholar argues that it's Thomas or Andrew or that guy, Bartholomew.

It's always some person or group decades removed from Jesus that is taking on John's identity and pretending and writing, pretending to be him.

[12 : 43] So denying John's authorship is in a way, a thinly veiled attempt, a subtle attempt to deny the truth, the reliability of what John saw and broke down.

That God really did come in the flesh in Jesus and die for our sins and rise on the third day. And that John saw that and he wants us to know this. So John won't let that stand.

He emphasizes in these four verses that he really is an eyewitness and saw Jesus. And he writes to us that we may believe and have eternal life. And in other words, so that we might know God through Jesus.

He wants us to know God. Right. And I mentioned this debate because John later goes on in his letter. He goes to war against people proclaiming similar ideas and goes to the point of calling them antichrists.

So in chapter two, verse 22, he says, Who is the liar? But he who denies that Jesus is the Christ. This is the antichrist. He who denies the father and the son. And later he writes, I write these things about those who are trying to deceive you.

[13 : 47] And every spirit who does not confess Jesus is not from God. That is the spirit of the antichrist. So see, John was adamant that Jesus really is God in the flesh because he wants us to know God.

And we can only know God through Jesus Christ. Verse one is about Jesus. When it says that which is from the beginning, this echoes back to John's gospel that we read during Advent. Leading up to Christmas. In the beginning was the word. The word being Jesus. And the word was with God. And the word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him and what without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life. And the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

You see, Jesus is God. He was in the beginning with God. And through Jesus, we have life.

Reading on to verse 14 there. The word became flesh and dwelt among us.

[14 : 48] And we have seen his glory. Glory as of the only son from the father, full of grace and truth. In verse 18. No one has ever seen God.

The only God who is at the father's side. He has made him known. And this was the good news that we celebrated during Christmas, right? The good news that the angels brought to us.

That Jesus is born. God became flesh and dwelt among us. No one has ever seen God. But Jesus has made him known. Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

The only sovereign, the king of kings and the Lord of lords. Who alone has immortality. Who dwells in unapproachable light. Whom no one has seen or has ever seen or can see.

Jesus has made God known. Right? Isn't that amazing? That the invisible God, John saw with his own eyes. The God whose voice shakes the earth.

[15 : 46] That the Israelites could not bear to listen to. God heard with his own ears. The unapproachable God. God, John touched with his own two hands.

And John proclaims this to us. So that we too can know God in the same way that he did. With this closeness and intimacy that John had.

We also can approach God because Jesus came in the flesh. And the question for us is, do we believe in John's testimony? That Jesus is eternal life.

The word became flesh and is the only way to God. I invite you to consider this with us in the next few weeks. If you haven't. I invite you to read this letter or John's gospel.

And I'm also sure there's many of us here who are willing to share about how God has changed our lives. Also. Invite us all to find eternal life in Jesus.

[16 : 45] John writes so that we might know God. We know him through Jesus. But more than that. He wants us to know that we know God. What I mean is he wants us to know with confident assurance.

Beyond doubt. That we know God. He wants us to feel in our bones that we are God's people. And that's what he says in chapter five, verse 13.

I write these things to you. You who believe in the name of the son of God. So that you may know that you have eternal life. See John writes his gospel so that we may know and believe in Jesus.

He writes us this letter now so that we may know that we know Jesus. That we might have confidence that we know Jesus and have eternal life. So who here has known God for, let's say five years.

Raise your hand. How about 10 years? Who's been a Christian for your whole life? You grew up going to church. Everyone with their hands up.

[17 : 46] Ask again. Do you know God? Do you know God? How do you know? How confident are you that your faith really is genuine?

You may have been going to church for five, 10 years, your whole life. But do you really know God? And how do you know that for sure? Do you have a reason for the hope that you have? Or is it just your parents' faith?

Or something that is just the default that you follow? But if it gets challenged, who knows what will happen? You may have known about God for decades, but do we really know him?

And have our lives been changed by the gospel? So this past Thursday at our midweek gatherings, we talked about some new year resolutions. And quite a few of us mentioned wanting to know God more.

Some of us have been going to church for a long time, but still honestly know that your faith is still shaky. You're not really sure if you know God for real, but you want to.

[18 : 50] And that's good. Some of you, some of us do know that we know God, but we want to know him more. We want more of him. We want to have more confidence, more assurance, more

closeness with him.

And enjoy him more, to know and enjoy him more. And God gave us this reason. John wrote this, this God gave us this letter for this reason so that we can do this.

He wants us to know beyond a doubt that we are God's children loved by him. And if we have this confidence, we can approach him with confidence to know him deeper, to know him even closer and comprehend even more the depth, the length, the height and breadth to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge itself.

Be filled with all the fullness of God. That's John's invitation to us in this letter of first John. And that's also my invitation to us all. To know God and to know that we know him with assurance.

So let's read on in verse three. John writes, that which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you so that you too may have fellowship with us.

[20:02] Here, John gives a reason for his proclamation. And I said that he wants us to know God and to know that we know God. But hold on. What does he say here? John writes in verse three, he writes so that you too may have fellowship with us.

See, I'd expect him to say here, he wants us to have fellowship with God. But instead he says, I write so that you may have fellowship with us. John doesn't say it directly, but he still means for us to have fellowship with God.

And I'll try to show that by looking at other parts of this letter to give us a scaffold for how to interpret other parts of this letter. So one pattern here in first John is that John will mention an idea and almost equate it with an other.

Like two ideas are so similar and intertwined so that when he mentions one, he also means the other. When he says idea a, he's also calling into mind idea B because these things are so closely linked.

Here's an example from, from chapter four. The first idea he says is to love one another. And the second one is to know God. So idea a love one another and idea B no God.

[21:16] Let's look at chapter four, verse seven and eight. He starts off by saying, beloved, let us love God. See love God. Then he says, for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

So you see here how he links the two ideas, whoever loves knows God and whoever knows God loves. These ideas come hand in hand and are inseparable. This means that when he tells us to love one another, he also wants us to know God even deeper because through loving, we come to know God and know the love that God has for us.

When we love one another with the love that God showed us, it proves that God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. So through love, we come to know with confidence that we know God. Another example is in chapter two, where he says idea a, don't sin. And secondly, be no God again. So in chapter two, verse one, he says, my little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

The notice he links not sinning with knowing God in verse three. By this, we know that we have come to know him when we keep his commandments. Whoever says I know him, but does not keep his commandments is a liar.

[22:37] And the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word in him, the love of God is perfected. By this, we may know that we are in him. Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Right? So there John starts off by saying, I'm writing to you that you may not sin. But by the end, we see there's another reason also in John's mind for that commandment.

He wants us not to sin because by that, we know that we know God. We can know that we know God when we follow his commandments and walk in the same way in which he walked.

Our obedience demonstrates that we are children of God. And if we are children of God, we will obey. See, God commands our obedience and love because this is how we know God even more deeply and intimately and have greater confidence that we are his.

Love and obedience are these means by which we can know that we know God. And it goes the other way as well. You cannot know God if we do not obey or love one another.

[23:44] Right? If we say we know God, but we don't keep his commands, we continue in sin and enjoy it. Then you are a liar. Or if we do not love one another, then we don't know God because obedience and knowing God are intertwined and love and knowing God are inseparable.

Right? So my parents there are visiting from Toronto. So you can say hi to them. William and Carol. Uncle William, Auntie Carol. But those who know me know that I love to eat.

So I'm a simple man. I love God and I love hot pot. So my mom would cook for us growing up. And I loved my mom's cooking. My mom would cook soup for us almost every meal.

And that's why now to this day I really like soup. And there's two soups I liked in particular. Mom, do you remember one of them? What's one soup that I like? Okay. There's a lot.

One of them was I like lo song tong. So this tomato, this tomato vegetable soup. So, you see, I love my mom and I love her cooking.

[24 : 53] So when my mom tells me, like drink more soup, I just do it. Obedience to that was easy. And I'd get another bowl.

And two minutes later, I'm staring at the bottom of my bowl again, my empty bowl. And so you would know that I love soup because this bowl was empty. I drank it all. But if I took one sip of it, a mouthful, and then just spit it out, like went to the washroom, spit in the toilet, what would you think, right?

It's clear that I didn't like it. I could talk all I want about how I love this soup. But I could say, wow, this soup tastes so good. But if I didn't drink any of it at all, you'd know that I was lying.

And that's how John writes this letter. He's just saying to us, drink the soup, man. Just drink it. Like loving God means loving others. And loving God means obeying his commandments.

You know that you love God when you love others and follow his commandments. You know that you do not love God if you do none of these things. So let's take this idea back to chapter one, verse three.

[25 : 59] John says, I want you to have fellowship with us. And then he continues. Indeed, our fellowship is with the father and with his son, Jesus Christ. And to be clear here, fellowship here means a close association, having much in common or a tight partnership.

That's the idea here. And John says, I want you to have this fellowship, this communion with us. Because his fellowship, because fellowship with us is intertwined in his head, inseparable with fellowship with God.

He's saying that if you have fellowship with us, us being these eyewitness and apostles of Jesus, then you also have fellowship with God. But if you do not have fellowship with us, then you also don't have fellowship with God.

And why is that? There's two reasons here. So one is because we can only have fellowship with God through knowing Jesus, through believing and following him. And that requires believing what the apostle said about Jesus's life, death and resurrection.

John says, no one who denies the son has the father. Whoever confesses the son has the father. Also, we can only come to know God. We can only approach him because Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead.

[27 : 13] And all who believe in Jesus have eternal life. And some people think that all religions teach the same thing and that there are different ways to God. That we're like a blind man feeling different parts of an elephant.

That's not true. That's not what God says in his word here. There's only one way to God. And that's through Jesus dying for our sins. Now, what does that mean for a church?

Right? Everyone is welcome here. To everyone here, you're all welcome. We're glad you're here.

But also at the same time, I want to make clear that this church is a gathering of God's people.

We are followers of Christ. And for those who don't know God, you're welcome here. And I say this with as much love as possible. But if you do not know God, then you are not one of us.

You do not really have fellowship with us because you do not have fellowship with God. But we want you to, and you can have this fellowship with God. That's why we're going through this letter so that we may know God and know that we know God through Jesus.

[28 : 18] We want everyone here to have the same love and joy that we have. So I invite you to keep joining us. And we'd be honored to be part of your journey to be seeking God together with you.

Secondly, loving God requires loving his church. There's no such thing as a solo Christian. In chapter four, we hear that this commandment we have from him, whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Everyone who loves the father loves whoever has been born of him. And that is the church, God's people gather together. And when we love one another, we grow in the love of God and come to know him more.

So if you're a Christian and you claim to believe in God, but feel like you're not growing. And you're not actively part of a local church and loving one another together in fellowship with other believers. Then I can't say I'm too shocked. If you think God's in your life, but he's not the center and just hidden away in the back corner. It could be because you also haven't prioritized loving his people, loving the brothers who also have fellowship with God.

[29 : 32] So how much do we love God's church? We can't grow close to God. We can't know God more without also growing close to his people and loving his people.

So that includes joining our weekly gathering or some weekly gathering of God's people to worship God together with them. But it's more than just popping in for an hour and a half every week, then popping out.

Do we really, as a church, know one another and love one another? Look to your left and to your right. Who's sitting beside you? Do you see these people as people that God loves, redeemed by the blood of Christ and have fellowship with God also?

Look to the people to left and right. Do you know their names? That's one place to start. And I know that our church is growing. We have a hundred people and it's not possible to know everyone deeply, but we can start small.

We like to ask around here, who's your five? Who's the five that you know? We'll start with five people. Are there five people here that you know and love deeply? Are there five that we can share our joys with or our sorrows with?

[30 : 46] Who can we turn to in a tough time? Does anybody know you? Somebody here had an emergency. Let's say they needed a place to stay suddenly or had to rush to the hospital. Is anyone here going to be calling your phone?

Who would you call up? Who's your five? If we want to know God more, we need to have fellowship with one another. So let's greet one another. We can say hi to one another, invite each other to lunch, get to know them, go beyond the small talk and really get to know them.

We don't have to share our deepest, darkest secrets immediately, but let's open up our lives to one another and try to get there. Because when we have fellowship with one another, that's when God abides in us.

And we know more deeply the love that God has for us when we love one another. So John writes to us that we would know God and know that we know him through obedience and loving one another.

There's one more thing. Let's look at verse four. In chapter one, verse four. It says, And we are writing to you so that our joy may be complete.

[31 : 53] John is writing so that our joy may be complete. And I've been talking a lot about love. But if you read these verses again, and this book, the apostle John and also first John is known a lot to be a book about love.

But if you read these first four verses again, there's no actual explicit mention of love here. And I think that's because that John doesn't just talk about love.

But first, before talking about it, he demonstrates it. So let's see how. He says, We are writing to you so that our joy may be complete. That's not explicitly.

He's saying that he wants his joy to be complete. Not our joy, but he wants his joy to be complete. Like here, I'd expect him to say, I'm writing to you so that you would know God, so that your joy may be complete.

You would have joy in God. But he says that he cares about our joy to such a degree that in order for his joy to be complete, we have to know God also. It's not enough for him alone to know God.

[32 : 55] But his heart is so full of love for God and for his church that his joy is only made full when we know him as well. Isn't that love?

Can you feel the love that John has for his church? And doesn't it remind you of the love that God has shown us when he puts our good? He loved us so much. He sent his son to die for our sins. Love looks to the interest of others and finds joy in seeing their good. There's a similar idea in 3 John, another letter. 3 John verse 4.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. No greater joy than that you guys are walking in the truth, that you guys are flourishing and you know God.

He talks like a parent who wants the best for his children. Right. So suppose I offered Joe and Alex an all expensive paid trip to the Maldives.

[33 : 54] Business class flights, ocean villa overlooking, the sea turtles, manta rays. Doesn't that sound good? You want that? Spa package for two? You want that?

Vet, right? But there's a catch. Suppose they brought Eden along and she got sick. Right. Or she caught a flu.

She has a stomach bug and she's crying the whole time. She's sniffing. She can't eat. She's throwing up. How would that make you feel? Would you still enjoy that vacation in the same way? Right. No, not at all. I think there'll be something in their heart. That's yeah. Something piercing the heart because Eden, their daughter is not feeling well. And they love baby Eden.

And for their joy to complete, they want to see Eden happy and healthy and loving God. And that's how John feels for his church. He loves the church dearly and seeks the church's good.

[34 : 58] And that's my heart for you also. I'm not perfectly and probably not to the same degree as John, but I want to see us as a church, know and love and glorify our God and savior Jesus Christ in order for my joy to be complete also.

And the question for us is, do we love each other with this love in the same way? If we do, this stirs up our gathering, right? We gather to encourage and exhort one another to know and love God because our joy is not complete unless we see others worshiping God also with the same joy and love.

And if we see one of us in need, how can we not open up our hearts and share generously with them for all that they need? If we don't do this, then we know that God's love does not abide in us. Do we love the lost in this way? Do we love people who do not know God in this way? If we do, then our hearts will be burning for their salvation.

Our hearts will be burning to scatter, to show mercy and to call people to know Jesus, to know the same joy and love that we know. And when we have this heart, when we want people to know God, then we will know that we're children of God and we'll come to know God even more deeply.

[36 : 14] We talk a lot here about gathering and scattering. I want us to do this out of joy, to gather and scatter out of joy, not out of obligation because we're told we have to come every week.

We have to go do the prison ministry. We have to go tell the friends about Jesus. But I want us to do this out of joy, that our joy may not be complete unless we see everyone worshiping God. We want to see everyone with us in heaven for all eternity, worshiping our God.

Let us gather, gather and scatter out of joy and love that we have for God. And when we have this heart, then we'll know that we're children of God.

Then we'll know God more deeply and intimately. So to sum it up, that's, that's this letter of first John. That's this book that we'll be going through in the next several weeks. It's a letter from the apostle John, an eyewitness to the church so that we would know that Jesus did come in the flesh. And to, to know, and more than that, to know with confidence that Jesus died for us and that we are God's children to know that we know God. And we can know that God through Jesus.

[37 : 22] We can only know God because Jesus died for us. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen his glory. And more than knowing God, we want to know with confident assurance, right?

That our sins are forgiven, that we have fellowship with God. And we can do this by having fellowship with one another, by loving one another, when we love one another and follow God's commandments.

So let's take this journey together, starting off 2024, like this, in fellowship with one another, seeking God together, seeking to know with confidence that we are his children.

We are a simple gathering in a complex time. And we seek to walk daily in the way of Jesus so that we may know him and enjoy him until the day he returns for good.

So let's do this together. Looking through first John, let's seek him together so that we may know him and enjoy him. Can we do that together? Let's pray for that. Lord, we thank you for your word.

[38 : 28] That the word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the father, full of grace and truth. May that be our confession.

Would we take hold of those words that we have seen the glory of God in Jesus and know you through him. And God, may you make us a gathering who is committed to obeying your word, to loving one another.

Make us your children. Help us to live as you called us to. Help us to know you more through displaying your holiness.

To know that we are made in your image when we follow your commands and love one another the way you loved us. and come to know the love you have for us through our love for one another.

God, help us to do this by your spirit. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.