

# The Word Made Real

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[ 0 : 00 ] Warm welcome to all of you who chose to be here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. Good morning, everyone. If you have a copy of God's Word, go ahead and turn with me to 1 John 1.

We'll be looking at the first few verses this morning. 1 John 1. 1 John 1. 1 John 1.

Let's pray. Lord, we are thankful for your word. We are thankful for what it does, how it goes around the world with ministries like Gideon's.

Father, for what it does in our own hearts, may we cherish it, may we love it, and may we worship you because of it. In Jesus' name, amen. Is that me?

[ 1 : 30 ] Sound like I'm in a wind tunnel. I don't know. All right. All right. So there's a skill that most of us don't acknowledge that we all have.

Some of us are better at it than others. In fact, it is so prevalent that economists think that this one skill makes up a quarter of our nation's economy.

That's a lot of money. That's more than a million dollars. In fact, this is so important that great leaders, businessmen, government officials, high school teachers, moms and dads, kids on the playground, all either do this or encourage us to grow in this one skill.

Harvard Business Review wrote this about that one skill. It said, Ideas are the currency of the 21st century. The ability to persuade, and that is that one skill.

To change hearts and minds is perhaps the single greatest skill of all time. The author of that piece went on to say that when words and ideas are exchanged, we have the power to change the world.

[ 2 : 45 ] Persuasion is then the most important skill that any of us can have, that any of us can possess. Now, you might be thinking, Well, I'm not sure I'm very persuasive.

I'm not sure I even all do that. But think with me for a moment. We know that politicians do it. They try to convince us to vote for them. We know that salesmen try to speak to us in a way that make us buy whatever it is they're selling.

But we all do it. It's not just those people. In fact, if we think for a second about our own lives, we do it. You convince that guy to hire you in your job interview.

You convince your son or daughter that, in fact, they should put on that jacket. Or that they should obey. Or that they should eat their vegetables.

Or you convince that toddler this morning to get in that car seat. Maybe it wasn't persuasion. You think it's actually more coercion.

[ 3 : 50 ] But the reality is that we're trying to convince people to do something. We're trying to convince people to think something. And the difference between maybe persuading that toddler or convincing someone to see something your way, and maybe you think those are all the same thing.

That manipulation, coercion, persuasion, it's all the same thing. But persuasion is trying to convince someone to do something or think something for their own benefit.

And it also benefits you on some level. That's the difference. Kids, you do this too. Think about when you're on the playground and you try to convince someone to trade that Pokemon card with you.

And you know the one that you have is actually terrible. Or you try to convince your brother or sister to stop coloring and ride bikes instead.

We do this from the earliest age. And this morning, John is trying to do the same thing as a rider. But he's not trying to convince people of something new.

[ 4 : 52 ] He's not trying to persuade them with something they've never heard before. But in fact, he's reminding them, I've already told you these things. Just like eating your vegetables or putting

on a jacket or getting in your car seat.

It's probably not the first time you said those things if you're a parent. John is saying, I've told you this before, but I'm reminding you again of how important it is.

He writes this later on in the book. He says, I'm writing because I've written about these things before. To you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you might know that you have eternal life.

This isn't news to them. But in the opening lines of this letter, he's pointing back to something. He's pointing back to this claim that we're going to examine this morning. The word of life is real. And we're going to do that in two parts. We're going to first look at its substance. Or what is it? We're going to define it and examine it. And then we're going to look at the effects. The so what. So the word of life, even that is ambiguous.

[ 5 : 57 ] We're going to see in a moment. The word of life and why it matters. First, now, when we're talking about persuasion, the thing that I didn't mention in this conversation is, no matter if in the 21st century or ancient history, everyone acknowledges that the seminal work, the most important thing ever written on this, is by a guy named Aristotle.

Now, I say that with some amount of fear and trepidation, because Matthew, he's much more apt at the philosophy stuff. And I barely can speak English sometimes.

So I say that with hesitation. I'm glad he's not here. I hope he's enjoying vacation. Now, Aristotle, from what I've read, okay, he wrote this book called Rhetoric.

And I've read it. He talks about certain elements of communication, certain elements that we can use to persuade others. And one of them is establishing credibility.

You know, why you should listen to me, why you should believe what I'm saying. And John does this same thing, but he does it in a very interesting way. Let's look at it. Read with me verse one.

[ 7 : 07 ] That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.

He's establishing credibility by pointing back, saying, this is not anything that's new. In fact, it's old, old history. He says this topic, this subject is important because of its age.

And it's not recent, but it's really, really old. And it's not just old. It's there from before time, from the beginning. That's what he does to establish credibility.

Now, if you're thinking to yourself, wait, this kind of sounds familiar. Let me jog your memory. Listen to this. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.

He was in the beginning, was God. And all things were made through him. And without him was anything, was not anything made that was made. And in him was life, and the life was the light of men.

[ 8 : 15 ] Or what about what we read earlier? In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. It sounds really similar. And when John is writing this, he's making a point to all of us, especially the people that would receive this letter, or this sermon.

He's saying, what I'm about to say relates to not just my gospel that I wrote to you, but it relates back all the way to the beginning, to Genesis.

And when we read this, it should get our juices flowing to say, oh yeah, I've heard this before. I know this story. And that is how credibility is established.

He also does something else that is very common in our modern day. He appeals to the senses. We like to think, though, that we're much smarter than the first readers of this letter, and that we have to know, and see, and touch, and understand everything.

But John's readers were the same way. And he says this, that you have seen it. You have touched it.

[ 9 : 21 ] You have even tasted it. You have felt with all of your senses and seen all of these things. You've heard the words. And then he circles back again in what's called a parenthesis, right?

That he says the same thing again, but in different ways. He says, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, which we have touched with our hands. He's saying this thing over and over again, kind of like what pastors do.

We say the same thing over and over again, but maybe with different words. And why do we use different words? Because we don't want to be like robots and just repeat everything. But we're circling around something that's really important.

So we're saying the same thing over and over again. And what is it that he's saying? He's saying that this is really important.

I want to remind you that this is credible, not because it's old, but also that you, that we have experienced it. This is something that's not new to you.

[10:27] You are personally acquainted with the subject. You see, John's writing this letter because he's concerned that Christians, that he's told the gospel to, that he's pastored and loved and watched them grow up, watched them grow up in their faith and children into adulthood.

He's concerned that they're walking away from the truth and that they're walking away from the message that he gave to them. You see, some of the people from this congregation that John is writing to had strayed away.

They thought there was new things to find out. That in fact, unless you went to this Bible study or heard this certain speaker speak or actually read this book, that you really wouldn't know what eternal life was.

And John's concerned about that and he points us back, he points his readers back to what they've heard before. And he says, you don't need anything new.

You don't need any new gadget or gizmo or word. Go back to the beginning. Go back to what I've told you because this is important.

[11:40] But what's he talking about? He's talking about the word of life. That's the subject. That's the that in the beginning. The word of life could be the message of Jesus.

If you start reading through this section up until the point where he talks about that it's touched by hands. So it's the message of Jesus but also the person of Jesus because in the person of Jesus, he accomplishes what he preaches.

The sacrifice, the once for all sacrifice for sin is Jesus himself but he communicates that message by his own lips. So it's the message of Jesus but also the person of Jesus.

And John says that Jesus embodies this message and you have seen it, you have touched it, you've even known it. You've known the person of Jesus.

And Jesus is the word and the word is life. He reminds us of that in the gospel of John. He tracks that all the way through for us. He's pointing in these very first verses back to Jesus as the answer for not these newfound issues that can be answered by new ideas, new problems that can't be answered by an old message.

[13:02] No, he says, go back to Jesus. And then he continues that again in verse two. He says, 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.

He's circling the drain. First he starts wider and then he gets closer. He says the same thing again but in a different way. At the same time, the drain is still in the middle.

He's going around and around saying the same thing, restating it. Again, this is not new. This is an old message both in age and familiarity.

He's not telling them anything new. He's not trying to persuade them like at the end of the Gospel of John where he's telling people who've never heard the good news of Jesus.

He's reminding them again that this is important. He's reminding us of the centrality of the person and message of Jesus for all of life.

[14:07] He's reminding us again and again that eternal life is found in Christ. Now John, he's terrible at grammar which is kind of funny because if you start grading this thing, that first couple verses is all one sentence and you're thinking, John, you're saying the same thing over and over again and you don't even give us a break like we can't even breathe with the period.

But John is actually a really good writer and a really good speaker. When you think of good speakers in the modern day, you might think of something called a TED Talk.

It's where an expert, air quote, gets up and convinces you that whatever they say is important and they're in authority on that. And I say, most of the time it is but sometimes it's a kid.

And sometimes they're experts on things where you're like, hey, I don't really think you know what you're talking about. Plus, where's your mom? But, you know, those influential videos where we hear about experts but John does the same thing that a lot of these TED Talks do.

He repeats things over and over to reinforce a point. He builds credibility just like Aristotle told him to do or Aristotle explains later that credibility is based on age and then experience.

[ 15 : 26 ] But TED Talks do something that John does here. where he tells a story invites us in. And if you look at the most popular TED Talks that are on the internet, all of them have an element of story where they invite us in and we get captured in what's going on.

If you think about a good book, reading a good book does the same thing. We kind of lose where we're at in life and we get immersed in the story. And then you add on top of that, you add emotion. Now you might be thinking, hey, I'm a math science guy. I don't really do feelings. Even the best of us have feelings and emotions. And when a story compels us and we get captured in it and then our emotions are involved, we're all in.

The same is true with John. The same is true with a TED Talk. Now TED Talks all end in this certain way. They say, and you might even use this phrase, thank you for coming to my TED Talk.

Now John, if you look at how he's written this, he doesn't have the focus on himself like many of these so-called experts. Like, if I want to tell you about Pokemon cards or I want to tell you about college football, I'm going to list my credentials and then you're going to believe me based on my credentials.

[ 16 : 46 ] Now John, he does something very different. And just like a TED Talk, he doesn't, he actually doesn't do anything like a TED Talk.

He says, hey, listen, my TED Talk is not about me. It's about Jesus. And he structures how he opens this letter in the same way. He doesn't say, I'm John, I knew Jesus, or I'm John, I'm really important, I know what I'm talking about.

He says, the subject is way more important than me, than what I'm delivering to you. That Jesus is more important than anything else. And he structures his letter in the same way.

He draws us into the story. He builds credibility. But it's all pointing to Jesus, not to John. How John structures this letter, how he repeats things, how he builds credibility, he's all explaining what the word of life is.

He's reassuring his readers. Remember, that's the point of this letter, to reassure people that the central point of life is Christ and him crucified.

[ 17 : 58 ] He's reassuring these people of the power of the gospel that rests not in John or his professionalism or his credibility and not how he talks, but in what Jesus has done and who Jesus is.

That's the point of why John's writing. Now, why does that matter? It matters for Christians. It matters for Christians then and now because if we get in a tough spot, if we're doubting our faith, oftentimes, we look to ourselves and think, well, you know, I know myself the best or my spouse says this or my friends say that.

John says no. look to Jesus. That's the thing that is certain because in our own lives, if we look to ourselves as to other people, the reality is that they're all marked by sin.

We all struggle with sin. We all struggle with doubts. So why would we look to ourselves for any amount of surety or certainty? No, instead, look to Christ.

And John knows this and he reminds his readers of this. Even how he sets everything up. He says, don't look to yourself. Look to the word of life because in him is found eternal life.

[ 19 : 19 ] Look to Christ and what he's accomplished on the cross. Don't look to yourselves. Don't even look to others around you. The certainty is found in the message of the gospel.

Not into these people who are trying to persuade you of new ideas or new things. The message is where certainty is found because of what Jesus has done.

So when we're discouraged and we think life isn't even going right, that we're struggling when we think I surely cannot be a Christian.

Look to Christ because that is more certain than ourselves. when we hear questions in our day, when we say, did Jesus really say that?

Or how could you even believe in this fairy tale, this fantasy? Look to Christ because that is certain. When there's war and there's rumors of war and our society seems to be going crazy, look to Christ.

[ 20 : 28 ] Look to Christ. That's where John is pointing to us because our assurance comes in what he's done on the cross on our behalf. Our forgiveness of sin is because of Christ.

Our certainty of hope is because of Christ, not because of any of us. Now, that's the substance of this word of life.

What about its effects? How does it affect our lives? If that's true and that's true of us, how do we live that out? What do we do now? Look with me at verses 3 and following.

That 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 His Son, Jesus Christ. He begins with this repetition again. He's saying the same thing but he's amplifying it. He's making it more intense. He's saying what we heard in verse 1 and verse 2 but we look at the effects of it. [ 21 : 37 ] It changes individuals and it binds us together but why? Because the word that was proclaimed, the good news that was proclaimed to each of us, to all these readers, changes us and makes us in fellowship together because we have fellowship with the Father through the Son, Jesus Christ.

That we have fellowship with the Father and because we have fellowship with the Father and you have fellowship with the Father and He has fellowship with the Father and she does then we have fellowship together.

But that's born out of the proclamation of the Word that the gospel was proclaimed to you and you've changed, you've become a saint, changed from sinner and because of that now you have fellowship.

fellowship is kind of a funny word. A guy I knew once always talked about fellowship in terms of kids and he would talk about kids going down to the basement and having coke and I think hot dogs, I can't remember the food.

But is that fellowship? Or is fellowship something different? Is fellowship what we do after church? Maybe. Or is fellowship as John uses it, it's a common bond.

[ 22 : 53 ] The New Testament uses it as fellowship, as having something in common, doing something together. In the gospels it talks about the disciples having fellowship in fishing.

Is that fellowship? Is that what he means here? John will go on later in some of his other letters to talk about fellowship with evil, that when we don't follow Christ we're actually in fellowship with evil. Is that fellowship? Fellowship is just having something in common and uniting us together. So if you're a Clemson football fan, we have fellowship together. If you really like coffee, you might have fellowship with Matthew.

If you like the Rockies, you probably have fellowship with my son. If you love Pokemon, you might have fellowship with another kid. It can go on and on.

Fellowship is having something that you both like that unites you together. So what is John talking about here? He's talking about fellowship that is found in the gospel.

[ 23 : 54 ] That's most of the time when we use that term. We use that as shorthand. Fellowship that we have in the gospel. But participation in fellowship is also participation in a mission.

It's just, it's not stagnant. And John reminds us of that here. He says that we have seen it, testified to it, and proclaimed to you eternal life, which was with the Father.

That's in verse 2. He's building this case that we are participatory. That which we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also so that you too may have fellowship with us.

Proclaiming and then fellowship. Sinner to saint then fellowship. That's how we have fellowship with the Father because we have put our faith in Christ.

If you don't have fellowship with the Father, you haven't put your faith in Christ. I encourage you, based on the words of John, to love Jesus because of what he has done on your behalf.

[ 24 : 55 ] Is your heart steward towards Christ because of what he has done? Jesus, both the person and the message is that Jesus has come and died and paid for sin as a ransom for those that are sinners.

And that's us. And if we put our faith in Christ, we have fellowship with God the Father because of the Son. That's the message of the gospel. That's what John's inviting us to participate in as we tell others about what has happened to us.

That is how we have fellowship. When I was a kid, you might have a granddad like this or a grandfather that's like this. I don't think I've had some near-death experiences in my life, but most of them have been at his hands, which is saying a lot, right?

He's a great man, he's with the Lord now, but he had some not-so-great ideas most of the time.

He's a smart guy, too. And one of my favorite slash scariest was when we went to our lake place.

We had a little house on the lake and there was a hurricane coming, so for those that aren't acquainted, think tornado, lots of big winds, lots of water, rain, you know, you stay at home, you don't drive an hour away to go out to this little, not shack, but cottage, lake house, cabin deal, and you definitely don't want to be outside.

[ 26 : 24 ] So he got the idea that he needed to go up there and make sure everything was, you know, put together and was in order, and so he said, hey, you're above the age of five, you're going to come with me.

So we went up there to make sure that our boat hadn't blown across the lake, that the house hadn't imploded because we built it, and his idea, he knew it was dangerous, and so he said, boy, he sometimes called me boy when he's very serious, or before a near-death experience, I'm going to tie you to this tree.

Now the reason he was going to tie me to the tree is one so I didn't blow away, and the other was so I didn't drown, okay, because the water had risen above our dock, it was a fixed dock, and so when we made our way down, after I was tied to this tree, and the tree is still there today, it was about three feet of water above the dock, so when you're about nine, that's pretty high, and it's windy, you should be inside, you shouldn't be outside when there's a hurricane, and he was concerned that I would die.

More importantly, he wasn't concerned that I would die, but then he wouldn't be able to get me back, okay, at least that's what my grandmother accused him of, that I would be carried away in the water and the wind, okay, and as we made our way down, it was pretty scary, and I remember seeing him slip and go under the water and thinking, I'm tied to this tree, I can't help you, but no matter what happened, the wind or the waves, even if I died, I am still anchored to this tree, I am bound to this tree by this rope, and that rope is not going to let me go under the water and float away, it might go under the water for a time, I might be blown over, but I'm not going to be blown across the lake, I might fall, no matter what happens, I have this anchor, I am bound to this tree, I am bound by this rope, John is reminding us that Christians, that we are bound together with God, not because of our ability to hold on to that rope, but because we are tied to him, we are tied to him because of what Christ has done on our behalf, because of our faith in Christ, even when it's weak, is secured not because of ourselves, but because of what Christ has done, he moves on from this and he says, I'm writing these things so that our joy might be complete.

[ 29 : 10 ] Union with God, union with Christ, is the source of our joy, and if we read this at its face, we think our joy is somehow lacking. John's not saying that, he's saying because I've cared for you, because I've told you the gospel, because I've pastored you, because I've shepherded you through all those storms of life, I feel a sense of joy in knowing that you're walking in the truth.

He'll say that later. That I love you, and that when I hear of the ministry of Gideons, or I hear of the ministry that's going on in other parts of the world, that we are together in this, in this mission, the proclamation of the word, and I rejoice to know that the word is going forth.

That's what he's saying. That we're doing these things for joy. So do we rejoice when we have fellowship with one another?

Do we rejoice when we go out after the service and eat those wonderful treats and drink coffee? Is that fellowship that we can rejoice in?

It is because it's not really about the coffee or the treats. It's about the conversations that we have with one another, stirring our hearts, prompting each other on, to know that, yes, I might be struggling, but I am bound with Christ.

[ 30 : 36 ] That even when I don't feel like I have the strength to hold on, that Christ holds me fast. That's what John is reminding us. And the joy to know as we walk through life together, as Christians, as followers of God, that we are united together in all of that.

And that brings joy because we are participating together in a mission, in seeing sinners transformed into saints, in seeing people raised from death unto life.

That gives us joy. That's something that we can rejoice in and hope in. that's fellowship. The effects of the message of Jesus are that we fundamentally transformed our priorities, that we see things differently.

We see the effects of his person and his message because of the actual message, because it is that good, because it is that powerful.

And when we encounter the storms of life, we are assured, not because of my own strength to hold on, but because of who Jesus is.

[ 31 : 53 ] Let's rest in that assurance. Let's rest in knowing that Christ and him crucified is the only thing that matters. Let's pray.

Lord, we are mindful this morning of the change that you have wrought in those that follow Christ. We pray that you might work in our hearts to hold us fast because of what you have done through Christ.  
May we know that, may we love it, and may we rejoice in the hope that's found in knowing Jesus.  
Amen.