**Grace Group Guide**

**1 John Week 2**

**1 John 1:1-4**

One of the most riveting stories I’ve read in my life was called “The Boys in the Boat.” **Full disclosure**: I listened to the book on CD. It is an incredibly inspiring story about the 9-man crew team from the University of Washington that competed in the 1936 Olympics. It amazed both Mandy and myself to listen to the backstories of the young men who made up this team as they struggled to navigate life during the depths of the depression. As the book went on, you felt more and more connected to the characters and eventually you feel like their burdens and hardships are your burdens and hardships, and their victories are your victories. Good storytelling has a way of sucking you in and having a tremendous effect on you.

I won’t give away the end of the book, but let’s just say that if I hadn’t been driving down the interstate at 75 mph, I would have turned to Mandy and given her double high fives! I remember how we both deeply exhaled and grinned foolishly. All I had done was listened to this book on CD, yet I found myself harboring a deep sense of pride and accomplishment – not because of anything that I had done, but because of what someone else had done on behalf of my country almost fifty years before I was even born. I wasn’t there to witness it, but many people were and they wrote about it – some in a more compelling way than others.

If you go back a few (or twenty) centuries, you can read another gripping story. One concerning a God-man who came to this earth so that He could give His life away. His life and testimony were witnessed and recorded by some of the people closest to Him. They walked with Him, talked with Him, broke bread with Him and learned from Him. They were His disciples. John, being one of those disciples had a story concerning Jesus that he wanted to share and he did that in the Gospel of John. He makes no bones about the fact that his whole purpose in writing and recording things in the way he had was to point people to Jesus as the giver of eternal life.

Now, think with me for a moment how absurd it would be if someone wrote a new book and they went in and changed a lot of the significant facts concerning the 1936 Olympics and disputed the fact that the young men from the University of Washington won Olympic Gold in the 9-man crew. When history says one thing, and personal testimony backs it up, why would anyone give a second glimpse towards such foolishness and outright deceit?

Well, that has been and will continue to be the problem with the Word and testimony concerning Jesus and the things He did on this earth. From the very beginning, people from inside and outside of the early church went in and changed the message concerning Jesus and He alone being the one who makes eternal life possible.

In the first four verses of 1 John 1, John reminds the church that the things concerning Jesus are true. He also reminds them that the message of truth concerning Jesus hasn’t changed in the last 50 or 60 years. He reiterates that it is the message of Jesus that serves as the source of fellowship for believers with each other, but also with the Father and with Jesus, the Son. Lastly, John says in 1:4, **“4These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.”**

Just like any author writes with intent, John reminds us that there is a purpose to his letter. As you’ll see the further we go, there were MANY purposes, but in verse 4 he uncovers the first one – to complete their joy. I said earlier how excited I got at the end of the book about the rowing team because of the journey I felt like I’d been on with them and the successes that had been experienced. But twenty minutes later, I was back to thinking about “real life.”

Notice how John's words parallel those of **Jesus** in His "**Upper Room Discourse**" to His disciples the night before His crucifixion…John 15:11

**Comment**: What are "**these things**" to which Jesus refers? Clearly we must read the preceding [context](http://www.preceptaustin.org/observation#establish the context) of [John 15:1-10](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%2015.1-10) which gives part of the answer. Ten times in those verses Jesus used the same verb which is literally translated “may abide,” which He uses in [Jn 15:11](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Jn%2015.11%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) to describe His joy abiding in His disciples. It follows as we **abide** in Him, His joy **abides** in us.

John Angell James alludes to how joy functions as the believer's strength or stronghold writing that…

*Spiritual joy is the oil to the wheels of obedience. It is this which braces up the soul for action, and carries it forward through difficult and self-denying duties. How can we best vanquish the world, that ever present, and everywhere present foe, which comes in so many forms, and with such golden pleas? How, but by a heart already well pleased with its own happiness in Christ. Spiritual joy is the world's vanquisher! And how easy, how perfect in its triumph! The heart by holy joy rises above the world, sees it below, covered with smoke and dust, and finds itself in a brighter, purer, happier region, with the cloudless sun above, and all around filled with his glory.*

Warren Wiersbe made this comment about joy: *The secret of Christian joy is to believe what God says in His Word and act upon it. Faith that isn't based on the Word is not faith at all; it is presumption or superstition. Joy that isn't the result of faith is not joy at all; it is only a "good feeling" that will soon disappear. Faith based on the Word will produce joy that will weather the storms of life. It isn't enough for us to read the Word or receive the Word as others expound it; we must also rejoice in the Word. "I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure" (*[*Ps. 119:162NKJV*](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ps.%20119.162)*). In Bible days, people sometimes hid their wealth in jars buried in the ground (*[*Matt. 13:44*](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt.%2013.44)*;*[*Jer. 41:8*](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Jer.%2041.8)*). If a farmer plowing his field suddenly discovered a jar filled with gold, he would certainly rejoice. There are great treasures buried in God's Word, and you and I must diligently "dig" for them as we read, meditate, and pray; and when we find these treasures, we should rejoice and give thanks. If we read and study the Word of God only from a sense of duty, then its treasures may never be revealed to us. It is the believer who rejoices in the Word, who delights to read and study it day by day, who will find God's hidden treasures.*

When it comes down to it, John wants us to know that assurance and fellowship with the Father and the Son and the saints who are like-minded cultivates a true, lasting joy in the life of the believer. **What are some enemies of joy that you have experienced in your life? How did you move past them?**