

LIVING RIGHT IN A WRONG WORLD

STUDY TWO

A Profound Preface

1 John 1:1–4

Eternal life is a life like no temporal life. This is a life like no romantic life. This is a life like no physician can talk about. This is a life even beyond our slang, “Get a life.” This is an eternal dimension of life that is known only by the Father and is transferred to us through His Son, Christ, who is the Word of Life. God is life.

—Charles R. Swindoll

NO hollow niceties. No beating around the bush. No majoring on the minors or getting lost in the weeds or dreaming among the clouds. With the urgency of an iron will and the focus of a hawk’s eye, the apostle John begins his letter on the most important matter: *eternal life*.

Every individual has an eternal soul, but our souls long for more than mere existence. We yearn for the kind of life that Jesus exemplified and He alone gives. In fact, that’s the reason God sent Jesus into the world, to give eternal life. According to John’s gospel:

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 NASB)

With great passion, John declared this message not only in his gospel but also in the opening lines of his first epistle. Because sin’s curse shrouded humanity with death, everyone stands in need of eternal life. Our souls yearn for a new kind of life that flows from an eternal, intimate relationship with God. John directs us to the *only* one who can offer it.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

A Profound Preface

1 John 1:1–4

John enjoyed fellowship with his Lord for decades—in Jesus’ earthly ministry as well as after He ascended. That fellowship brought John a quality of joy that can come only from eternal life. He wanted others to have it. This study focuses on John’s profound preface, which centers on eternal life—where it is from, what it is, why John proclaimed it, and the blessing of possessing it.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Reflect on the Puritan prayer below to help you focus your heart and mind on Christ and His Word.

May my cry be always, Only Jesus! Only Jesus. In him is freedom from condemnation, fullness in his righteousness, eternal vitality in his given life, indissoluble union in fellowship with him. In him, I have all that I can hold; enlarge me to take in more.¹



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The first phase in Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study is observation. Observation involves nothing more than reading carefully and attending to detail.²

Every biblical author addresses one or more *subjects* in their writing. Sometimes they state their subject, sometimes not. Then, they write *about* the subject. Furthermore, they write because they want to produce in you a certain *response* to their writing.

John’s preface states the subject clearly: “eternal life.” Now let’s see what he says.



Observation: What We Have Seen

Because we address only four verses, *1 John 1:1–4*, choose two Bible versions to use for observation. Read the passage repeatedly and thoroughly looking for what John says *about* eternal life.



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How did John describe the “Word of life” in *1 John 1:1*.

Now list the statements about “life” John adds in *1 John 1:2*.

Where does eternal life come from? Notice the end of verse two. The life was “with the Father” (1 John 1:2). Because God is life, He is the *source* of life.³ He channels His life to us through Jesus. In Christ, God’s life dwelled among us tangibly as the “Word of life.” Because Jesus is God incarnate, He is eternal life and the *source* of eternal life.

What is eternal life? John’s adjective “eternal” gives us a clue. The adjective emphasizes kind, not duration. In Greek, John wrote that Jesus “is one who is the life, the eternal kind.” Eternal life is a whole new dimension of living that comes only from God through Christ to us.

This life was “revealed to us,” referring to the apostles (1:2). Through the proclamation of the apostles, we gain access to the same faith and eternal life they themselves tasted.

Eternal life is a life like no temporal life. This is a life like no romantic life. This is a life like no physician can talk about. This is a life even beyond our slang, “Get a life.” This is an eternal dimension of life that is known only by the Father and is transferred to us through His Son, Christ, who is the Word of Life. God is life. —Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: That You May Have Fellowship

Discovering *why* an author wrote helps us interpret *what* he wrote. In this profound prologue, John recorded two purpose clauses to help us know why he crafted this majestic letter.

Look at *1 John 1:3*. Why did he proclaim what he had seen to his readers? What do people gain when they receive eternal life?

What is significant about *fellowship* in *1 John 1:3*?

In *1 John 1:4*, John added another reason for writing. That reason lies in the outcome of divine fellowship. Explain that outcome and its significance below.

What a privilege we have as Christians! We have been given the keys to eternal life. We have been given entry into the throne room of heaven. We have been given a kind of joy greater than any other joy obtained in the cosmos.



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Correlation: The Blessing of Joy Unspeakable

In his first letter, Peter unfolded the benefits that faith in Christ grants us. Joy is one of them. The early church cherished the joy Christ gives. They wrote of it often. Observe *1 Peter 1:3–9*. Summarize his main points. Note especially what he said about our joy in Christ.

In his commentary on 1 John, pastor and Bible-scholar Martyn Lloyd-Jones explained the necessary link between our experience of joy and our closeness with Christ:

Joy is something very deep and profound, something that affects the whole and entire personality . . . there is only one thing that can give true joy and that is a contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He satisfies my mind . . . my emotions . . . my every desire. He and His great salvation include the whole personality and nothing less, and in Him I am complete. Joy, in other words, is the response and the reaction of the soul to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴

Take a minute to sum up John's prologue. Answer the four questions: Where does eternal life come from? What is eternal life? Why did John write about eternal life? And what is the blessing of eternal life?



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Chuck's Commentary Insight

First John Theme: Life

The life that was manifested wasn't the normal, everyday, earthbound life—what we may call “biological life.” . . . In John's usage, this life, *zōē* . . . refers to eternal, heavenly, divine life, literally embodied in Jesus Christ. He is “the bread of life” (John 6:48), “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), and “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). This is the life that was “with the Father and was manifested to us,” which is why He was able to be seen (1 Jn. 1:2). When a person has seen the Word of Life manifested in the flesh, the only reasonable response is to “testify and proclaim” this eternal life.⁵



Application: Eternal Life in and through You

Recall your first real awareness of eternal life—when God awakened your spirit and opened your eyes to His love for you through Jesus Christ. Reflect on that priceless moment. Relive it. Record what first entered your mind and how Jesus made you feel.

Did you notice the past-tense verbs John used? John *saw*, *heard*, and *felt* eternal life which was *revealed* to him in Christ. That new kind of life he proclaimed to his readers. Christ does not want us to keep our fellowship with Him a secret. We share it.



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Choose one way you would like to share with a family member or friend your relationship with Christ. Think over how being a follower of Christ has benefited you and changed you. Consider the core truths you wish to talk about. Select a person. Decide a location. Make a plan. Act.

With such a weighty and electrifying subject like eternal life, who can blame John for his fervent, punchy prologue. He did not introduce it through a side door, or open with a story, or toss out a joke to get our attention. He told it straight. How grateful we are that he did!



A FINAL PRAYER

I love You, Father. As best I can, I would like to know a kind of life that's eternal, full of forgiveness and grace and acceptance—an enriching sense of purpose. Continue to help me, as I study Your Word and work my way through this love letter to better know Your Son. Thank You in advance for the truths in Your Word yet to be discovered. May these truths transform me and help me live on earth a heaven-driven life. In the name of King Jesus, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Adapted from Arthur Bennett, ed., *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975, reprint 2011), 54.
2. To review Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website sts.insight.org. If you do not have Chuck's *Living Insights* commentary on 1 John in your library, [grab a copy](#) at Insight for Living Ministries' web store.
3. As John develops his thoughts about God, he will add two more crucial revelations: "God is light" (1 John 1:5) and "God is love" (4:8).
4. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in Christ: Studies in 1 John*, one vol. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 30.
5. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 14 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2018), 25–26.

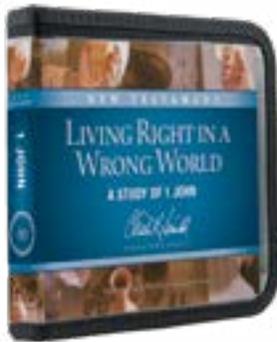


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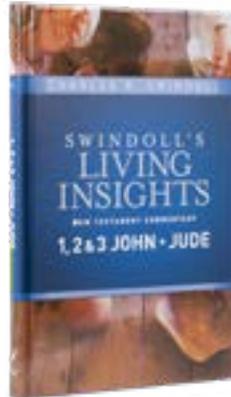
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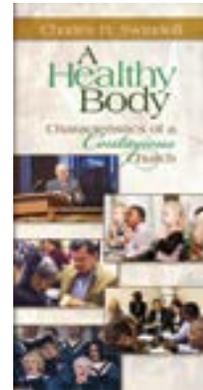
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

