

BALANCE

Our message this morning begins with... *the ceiling fans*. Some are working quite smoothly. This back one looks a little scary.

Anyone remember what we used to do in the "old days" of ceiling fans? If a fan was wobbling, you'd put a penny on the offending blade to bring the fan into balance. There is nothing scarier than a ceiling fan, that's over your head, and way out of balance!

The Christian faith is a lot like a ceiling fan, there is nothing scarier than a faith system that's way out of balance. An unbalanced fan can tear itself out of the ceiling; an unbalanced faith system can tear down your world.

Scripture encompasses truth as a whole; we tend to see truth in little chunks. So, God does this amazing thing in His Word where He presents a truth from one angle, then from a counter point or second angle that gives us balance. For thousands of years, Rabbinical teaching called this, "the angles of a diamond."

There are 70 valid explanations to every part of the Torah (Bamidbar Rabbah 13:15).

The modern [Rabbi David Rosenfeld](#) explains the concept like this:

They were seeing different aspects of the same all-encompassing truth — just as the many facets of a diamond glimmer differently at different angles.

Here's an example; a foundational concept to Christianity is "grace"; God's undeserved favor. But there are two very different elements to grace. God is perfect **love and mercy**, He invites all to come. But God is also perfect **justice**, so there are standards and consequences with God, as well. If a person or group only embrace God as unconditional love, they will go off the rails on standards. If they are heavy on the justice, they will become cold and legalistic.

I would dare say; imbalance has caused more catastrophe in the Christian faith than anything else. ...**Enter the Apostle John**. It is believed that some 30 years before John wrote the Book of Revelation around 95 A.D. at the age of 80. Some 30 years before that, he wrote three little letters we find near the back of the Bible. They are little letters with huge teaching that were really big on guess what... BALANCE.

And they had to be! People in his day were given to imbalance as much as we are today. In his day, as Christianity was just gaining momentum, gnostic Greek philosophy was making inroads into the Gospel message. In their thinking, Christianity was all spiritual with no physical element. God was only interested in spirit and mind and you could do whatever you wanted with your body; that led people into all kinds of weird stuff.

So, like the book of Revelation, we just finished; John doesn't tell them anything new, He simply balances what God has already said. And he tells us clearly why he's writing these letters: "**We write this to make our joy complete.**" (v. 4)

It's worth pausing on this for a moment. The spirit of the letter isn't so you can be extra pious, or wise; or that you can wow friends and family with your deep knowledge; or out of a sense of duty. **Balance is so that you may experience joy**, and so those who are **giving** the message may experience joy.

As the prophet Nehemiah said, **"The joy of the Lord is your strength."** (Ne. 8:10)

We'll go deeper this evening, but for now, let's look at three crucial areas of balance from 1 John chapter 1:

PHYSICAL VERSUS SPIRITUAL

John starts his letter in a way that may sound straight forward in English, but in the Greek, it is a verbal obstacle course. And John did this on purpose. In a nutshell, it comes down to this:

He speaks of the **"Word of Life."** From previous studies, we know that the word for "Word" is a loaded word! The Greek "Logos" means the spirit, nature, reasoning, and motive behind any spoken word or argument. It is the heart and soul of God's message to humanity. Here's the thing to note: ***You can't see thoughts or reasoning, they are abstract things; you can't see "spiritual."***

But check out what John says about "Logos"; he and the other disciples *heard, saw, even touched it*. That covers nearly every way one experiences physical things! In the Gospel of John, he introduces Jesus this way:

John 1

(NIV) ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

The concept of "logos" in the person of Christ is really beyond comprehension. It is saying that the heart, soul, and core of God was physically seen and experienced! It was in every spoken word and in every act of compassion and judgment. ***Since the time of Christ, we can no longer separate the spiritual and physical; they come in a balanced set.***

Here is the balanced truth: **There is no amount of physical work that you can do to form a relationship with God.** In your effort, you will never be *good* enough, you will never *do* enough.

Ephesians 2

(NIV) ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is **not from yourselves**, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Only God could open up the way to God. *The sacrifice on the Cross by the "Logos", Jesus is a topic in itself. Our part is to accept. There's blade #1 of the fan.*

The counter point is this: **God Himself, did something physical to impact the spiritual.** The Cross was a very physical act. *Did you know, that by Roman law, no Roman citizen could be executed on a cross; it was too brutal for any son or daughter of Rome. Execution for a Roman was by axe. Only non-citizens suffered this humiliation.*

Jesus lived an everyday human life because the inner life, the spiritual life, if it is real is lived out in the physical world.

Here's what that means for ***our balance***:

We are not in a living relationship with God unless there is inner change; in thought, and nature. -God inside!

If the inner change is real, it will show on the outside; in your attitude, your deeds, priorities, ambitions, schedule; where you go for pleasure or help. And the biggest way will be how you respond to God, and through God.

In a few cases, **God has called for a certain physical response** as a symbol of obedience. Baptism has a nearly 4000 year history. Communion is another physical symbol. The bread and drink are physical symbols to remember what Christ has done.

God has a physical model for doing life in Him. Christianity must be done in community. In verse 3, John uses a very powerful word in the Greek, (*koinonia*), we translate it as "**fellowship**." This is more than a donut and a light conversation in the fellowship hall. "*Koinonia*" means *partnership, participation, interaction, even communion*. It refers to a group of people who have such a powerful experience or belief in common, that it bonds them above everything else. Specifically, if God is in you, and in me, there can be nothing stronger!

John puts it this way:

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have ***fellowship with one another***, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (v. 7)

The ***blood refers to the spiritual sacrifice that changes us inside***. That change is ***acted on the outside***. One of the outer actions is gathering with others with the same inner change. How's that for a thought; we need each other to experience God in any balanced way!!

God is spiritual, but God is also physical. Being changed by God definitely impacts one's *inner-life*; but must also transform your *outer-life*. A relationship with God is private, and yet it can't be hidden from the world. A relationship with God is centered in how you believe, but only if you do what you believe.

With the balance problem in his day, **James** put it this way; in summary:

(NIV) ¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ...¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. (James 2)

This little chapter of 1 John, touches on a number of other balances:

- Community with God balanced with community of other people.
- Truth versus lie; light versus dark.
- What you ***are*** versus what you ***do***.
- Sin as our nature versus sin as our actions.

There is a balance that needs to be reached and maintained in all these elements. We'll expand into others this evening. Some of what John presents is pure genius if we dig a little deeper.

THE TAKE-AWAY

But for **this morning**, let this be our take-away.

- It is ***possible for you to have complete joy*** in your experience with God. That's why John is writing this letter in the first place!
- But that ***joy can be no deeper than your understanding*** of the points and counter-points in which God communicates the truth.
- Then those different "angles of the diamond" need to be ***kept in balance***. One being, the balance of a God-loving inner life and outer life.

Let me put it to you in visual terms:

- Is your life more like this? [Video- fan unbalanced]
- Or like this? [Video of balanced fan]

Isn't it amazing, the only difference between the two is balance; and please don't think this is only the things that are before our eyes; the issues we tend to think of as "real life." The truth is; most of that physical stuff passes very quickly.

What needs to be in ***balance first and foremost are the eternal things***; the *God* things. Without that balance, I guarantee you, there is absolutely no hope of making your "joy complete."