

An Introduction to I John & the Critical Theory of our Society

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Series: Certainty – Absolute truths that bring joyful assurance. / 1 John 1:1–4; 1 John 1:1–2:6

1 John 1:4 KJV 1900

⁴ And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Our joy is incomplete without assurance about the complete truth about Jesus. There is no complete jubilation without God’s self-revelation, fellowship with God in Jesus Christ, without believing universal, absolute truths about Jesus Christ, and without assurance that these truths are actually true.

Here are some foundational verses to help us understand the book of I John:

1 John 2:1 KJV 1900

¹ My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

1 John 2:26 KJV 1900

²⁶ These *things* have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

1 John 5:13 KJV 1900

¹³ These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

- › Kids’ Pause: Children, how do you know that something or someone is real when you cannot see him? The book of 1 John answers how you know Jesus is the real, true God.

Our world, especially we in the West, battles with postmodern theory. Postmodernism is a worldview (way of seeing the world) that is skeptical of all absolute truth claims or access to absolute truth. Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay in their book *Cynical Theories* say, “Postmodernism is characterized politically by its intense focus on power as the guiding and structuring force of society...a focus which is codependent on the denial of objective reality (35).”¹

¹ Pluckrose, Helen & Lindsay, James. *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity* (Durham: Pitchstone Publishing, 2020), 35.

This way of thinking rejects the scientific method as the means to determine what is real, and it develops into what has been called Critical Theory. In other words, the theory claims that you cannot know what is 100% true and your upbringing, background, influences keep you from even accessing what is 100% true.

This develops into what is called *Postmodernism Applied* (PA). PA is how you take a theory and put action to it. Hence, you have not only protests but also protestors which tear down statues and historical monuments that represent, in their perspective, oppression. One school district in Virginia spent \$450,000 on renaming three schools [<https://www.foxnews.com/us/virginia-school-district-450g-name-changes-coronavirus-pandemic>].² This is one of dozens of stories over the last year where there are attempts to right wrongs of the past.

All of this is based on the postmodern worldview – which says that nothing can really be known for certain. This kind of reasoning shows a **deep need within mankind**: *a need to feel valued, heard, complete, whole, glad, joyful— a way to be certain that I am meaningful to me.*

So, if we want to see change in our own lives and change in the lives of an unbelieving world, we cannot merely react to the symptoms of a problem. **The heart issue must be exposed.**

The problem is that we Christians have sold Christianity quite short. We get emotionally angry about things we see in the news, but we don't see that our inability to make clear, absolute claims about Jesus and then prove those claims is part of the problem.

- How can we be sure that God has indeed manifested himself?
- How can we be sure that we are in fellowship with the Father through Christ?
- How can we be sure that these written truths about Christ are absolute?
- How can we be sure that these truths about Jesus Christ are absolutely true?

There are absolute truths that produce joyful assurance, and it is imperative that we examine ourselves as to whether we are (1) really saved, (2) presently

² <https://www.foxnews.com/us/virginia-school-district-450g-name-changes-coronavirus-pandemic>, Accessed: 01/10/2021.

finding assurance in these truths, and (3) increasingly growing in these assuring truths.

(1) Are you really saved?

The epistle of I John will present 100% absolute, universal truths about God and Jesus Christ that must be believed. The epistle of I John will also present proofs that you can look at to ensure that you are truly a believer.

1 John 5:13 KJV 1900

¹³ These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

This verse has often been used wrongly, after we have taken someone through the Romans road. We tell the person who just prayed that they do not have to worry about their salvation anymore because of this verse, but notice the details. John has written this entire letter with this purpose in mind. John did not write this verse with Romans or the plan of salvation or the prayer of the unbeliever in mind.

So, to be honest with I John 5:13, if someone wants to know if they have eternal life, they need to know what John said in I John 1-5. Make a list of the things John writes to these people so that they know they have eternal life. Others need to be saved today.

- › Kids' Pause: Children, you can only have eternal life when you believe in Jesus Christ of the Bible. Jesus wants to save you and for you to be assured of your salvation.

(2) Are you living with assurance?

The Lord wants his people to live with assurance of eternal life, but it must be assurance based on the truth of Jesus Christ. Pay attention to the use of “hereby” in the following verses:

1 John 2:3-5 KJV 1900

³ And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoso keepeth

his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

1 John 3:19 KJV 1900

¹⁹ And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

1 John 3:24 KJV 1900

²⁴ And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

1 John 4:13 KJV 1900

¹³ Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

The certainty found in these verses is in contrast to postmodernism: "For postmodernists, Theory refers to a specific set of beliefs, which posit that the world and our ability to gather knowledge about it work in accordance to the postmodern knowledge and political principle (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 47)."

Theory gives way to new disciplines which have come to be known loosely as "Social Justice scholarship."³ Though I agree with the words themselves, I do not agree with what they represent in our culture, and how they are based on a teaching that there is no real objective knowledge or reality.

The problem though is how Christians are thinking and responding. Let's imagine that the Apostle John were to give a response to Christians today, who are living in a culture that is rejecting the objective truth, including that of Jesus Christ. What would he say? Let me tell you what he would not say, and then tell you what he is still saying. He would not say, "Well, our founding fathers, 200 years ago wrote these documents about *life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*." I don't think that John would root his argument in that. I believe John would say, "Well, 2000 years ago, God made himself known to us in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the manifestation of what is true and real."

Christians today, in the West, need to return back to the truth of Jesus Christ to have assurance. Some are living with assurance in the wrong thing, and when that thing is rocked, so is their assurance. Some have lived with assurance in

³ Pluckrose & Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 47.

Christian tradition rather than in Jesus Christ. Because of this, their completeness of joyful assurance is only found when they are in a church that is meeting their traditions. As one song reminds us: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.” As Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:12, “...for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

- › Kids’ Pause: Children, some of you are worried about the country because you have seen your parents worried about the country. You can be confident in Jesus, His will, and you don’t have to be worried.

(3) Are you increasing in belief of these assuring truths?

One of the final things that the letter of John will do is help us increase in assurance of these truths.

- **He will present the truth and the anti-truth.**

1 John 1:5–6 KJV 1900

⁵ This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

- **He will be repetitive and cyclical.**

1 John 2:12–14 KJV 1900

¹² I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake. ¹³ I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. ¹⁴ I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

We must increasingly know and believe what we believe about Jesus. We must learn to rightly articulate what we believe about Jesus. We must have confidence, based on clear truth, for living our Christian lives.

- › Kids' Pause: Children, getting to know and obey Jesus is a life-long, wonderful trip. Never stop growing in love and never stop following Him.

Even though I didn't answer the question of how you know something or someone is real when you cannot see him, 1 John will answer that. Take the time to read this letter. If you read 1/2 a chapter of 1 John every day for a week, you will have almost the entire book done.

It would be wise for all of us to examine 1 John immediately. Laziness must cease! We have the God who has made himself known to us, and it is a shame that we do not take time to consider how he has done this and what he has revealed. Mom and Dad, if someone were to ask you, "How do you know that your child has eternal life," what would you say? Students, is there such a thing as "your truth, my truth"? What would I John say about that? Seniors, when many in your generation are being called racists and bigots...where is your confidence? Will you respond with confidence in a 200-year-old argument or with the universal truth of Jesus Christ?

We presume upon life. At the end of the day is sleep. At the end of sleep is another day. At the end of a number of days is a month. At the end of 12 months is a year. At the end of a number of years is death. In whom have you placed your confidence for life and death? Whomever you are placing your confidence in for then ought to be who you place your confidence in now.

Critical, postmodern theory would have you believe that knowledge is relative, **but I John teaches you that there is absolute truth.**

Critical, postmodern theory would have you believe that completeness is accomplished by exposing the ills of the past and making repairs and restitution now. **Yet, I John teaches that completeness of joy is found in the finished work of Jesus Christ.**

Critical, postmodern theory makes heroes of the removal of boundaries, the changing of terminology, cultural relativism, and intense focus on identity politics. **I John teaches that the historical, true Jesus of scripture is the hero.**

Which one will you believe? These are two teachings in conflict with each other. To believe one is to dismiss the other.