

New Year. New Knowledge

1 John 5:13-21; January 14, 2018

Introduction: Leigh and I were really grateful to be to spent some time with both of our families over the Christmas break and, for the most part, it was a pretty restful and laid back time. One of the things I really enjoy doing on vacations is working through a book or two that piques my interest. Well, before we left, I perused all of the “Best Books of 2017” blogs and there was one book in particular that frequented many of the lists I saw. It was called *Reset* by David Murray and the subtitle is: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture. It piqued my interest because I knew I needed a “reset” in some areas of my life.

One area in particular was related to my health. Some of you guys know this, but physically speaking, I haven’t felt 100% since Thanksgiving. I’ve been having constant headaches (something I’ve struggled with off and on in my life) and continual sinus congestion. I was never really sick enough to not work but just a lingering achy feel. As I read through *Reset* over the break, I knew that I needed to hit the “reset” button on a number of areas related to my health. I knew there were some medicinal things I need to explore related to my symptoms but I also knew that there were some habits related to my health that needed adjusting as well.

The good news is that I’m now being treated for a sinus infection and hopefully that will get to the bottom of my headaches and congestion but I also did a good bit of reading around healthy nutrition, exercise and weight loss. I know! I know! Just like everyone else in the world right now with new years resolutions :). What have I learned? Here’s the deal: I know there’s tons of ads about do this and lose “x” amount of pounds but weight loss basically boils down to this fact: you’ve got to burn more calories than you eat (and there’s a lot of other variables, like metabolism, that affect this). But when you really start diving into this, there are a number of things to consider:

- Nutrition: calorie intake
 - What kind of foods are best for me?
 - How much of a certain food should I eat?
 - How frequent should I eat?
 - What is best for breakfast? Lunch? Dinner? Snack?
- Exercise: calorie burn
 - How frequent should I exercise?
 - What kinds of exercises are best for me to reach my goals?
- Sleep

The point of this illustration: knowledge won’t make you lose weight (you can reject that knowledge and not change your eating, exercise and sleep habits), but without, you don’t stand a chance of succeeding.

Transition: in the same way, in our passage today, John recaps some of the major themes of his this entire letter and his point is this: knowledge of these truths is essential to living the Christian life.

Read 1 John 5:13-21: I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life-- to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death. We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Context:

- The one word that grabs us multiple times throughout this passage is the word “know.” In fact, it occurs 7 times in these 9 verses alone.
- John is highlighting the certainties of the Christian life, the things that we can have complete assurance and confidence in.
- As we work through the text, we’re going to see that he gives us four certainties to consider along with one final command.

1. Know that you have eternal life (13).

- “These things:” As we’ve mentioned throughout our series, this verse contains John’s purpose statement for writing this letter.
- The Recipients: “you who believe in the name of the Son of God”
 - He’s written to believers.
- The Purpose: “that you may know that you have eternal life:
 - False teachers were trying to lead them astray and this made them doubt whether they really possessed eternal life.
 - His point is to strengthen believers and reassure them that they should have confidence that they possess eternal life (know = perfect tense).
 - Additionally, this eternal life isn’t something in the future, it’s something they possess even now (present tense).
- How has John sought to give confidence through his letter? He’s pointed to reader often to reflect on the pattern of his or her life (1:7, 9; 2:1-2, 3, 6, 10, 15-17; 3:14).

2. Know that God hears and answers your prayers (14-17).

- You can be confident that God hears and answers your prayers.
- This isn’t an isolated occurrence to have confidence in praying. Jesus says this:

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14:13-14 ESV)

- What is the key to our confidence: “If we ask anything according to his will.” What does this mean? Let’s check out a few parallel verses first:

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (John 15:7 ESV)

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10 ESV)

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. (1 John 3:21-22 ESV)

- What does it mean?
 - It’s very practical. The Bible is God’s revealed will for our lives and this world and we should pray it back to God for both ourselves and others.
 - All of our prayers should be in alignment with the will of God. In other words, try and tie as many prayer requests as possible to Scripture.
- Reflections from *A Praying Life* by Paul Miller:
 - “All of Jesus’ teaching on prayer in the Gospels can be summarized with one word: *ask*. His greatest concern is that our failure or reluctance to ask keeps us distant from God. But that is not the only reason he tells us to ask anything. God wants to give us good gifts.” He then continues, “Deep down, we just don’t believe God is as generous as he keeps saying he is.”
 - We should avoid two dangers in our praying: 1) not asking and 2) asking selfishly (cf. James 4:3). When we don’t ask, we implicitly convey, “God does nothing.” When we ask selfishly, we’re saying, “God does my will.”
 - Which side of the cliff are you most prone to fall off? Not asking or asking selfishly?
 - What’s the solution: Ask boldly, surrender completely (cf. Mark 14:36).

And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." (Mark 14:36 ESV)

- I love what John Stott says, “Prayer is not a convenient device for imposing our will upon God, or for bending his will to ours, but the prescribed way of subordinating our will to his. It is by prayer that we seek God’s will, embrace it and align ourselves with it. Every true prayer is a variation of the theme ‘your will be done’” (John Stott).
- Idea: As you read through the Psalms in our church Bible reading plan, turn those Psalms

into prayer. That's why the last arrow asks this, "What does this passage prompt me to pray to God?"

- What is John talking about in 5:16-17?
 - John's main concern is to encourage believers to pray for those whose sin "does not lead to death."
 - I'll just be upfront and honest, there is no scholarly consensus on what John means here. There are three main options: 1) it's a specific, deadly sin, 2) it's similar to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 12:32) and 3) it's a total rejection of the gospel.
 - When I approach hard texts, one principle I use that Scripture interprets Scripture. Since this is God's Word, he won't contradict himself so I use clearer texts to help interpret unclear texts.
 - 1 John 1:9: in view of this text, I don't think John is referring to a particular ugly act of sin. There's no sin specific sin too large for God to forgive.
 - I lean towards some kind of combination of the last two options. The ESV Study Bible puts it this way: "Sin that leads to death is probably sin that is (1) unrepented of and (2) of the kind or nature that John has warned about throughout the letter: resolute rejection of the true doctrine about Christ, chronic disobedience to God's commandments, persistent lack of love for fellow believers—all indications of a lack of saving faith—which will not be forgiven" (ESV Study Bible). This describes someone who is not a true follower of Jesus (cf. 3:9; 5:18).

3. Know that, as a child of God, you have victory over sin and Satan (18-19).

- John now transitions from the confidence we have in prayer to knowing and having right attitudes toward sin, the world and the Son of God. Notice the repeated, "We know." These are all summary statements of truths John has taught us throughout his letter.
- The main truth: if you are a believer in Jesus, you have been "born of God" (18) and are "from God" (19).
- As a result of the above truth:
 - A) We won't fall into long-term habitual sinning (cf. 3:6-7; 9-10).
 - "Keep on sinning" = Present tense.
 - B) Satan can't harm or touch us.
 - Though he may persecute us, tempt us, test us and try to accuse us, his influence and power is limited by the protecting power of God (see John 10:28; 17:12-15).
- The world, on the other hand, lies in the power of the evil one.

4. Know that Jesus is the true God and eternal life (20).

- All of these promises are secured because of the person and work of Christ.
 - It's because of him that we have eternal life because he defeated death.

- It's because of him that we can approach the throne of God with confidence through prayer because he is at the right hand of the Father interceding for us.
- It's because of him that we are protected from the evil one and gain victory over sin.
- Jesus is the *true* God (note mention of “true” 3 times).
 - This is one of about 12 other clear affirmations of Jesus as God in the NT (John 1:1, 18; 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; 20:28; Matt. 1:23; 16:16; 26:63-64; Mark 1:1; 15:39; Rom. 9:5; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Phil. 2:5-7; Col. 2:9; Tit. 2:11-13; Heb. 1:3, 8; 2 Pet. 1:1).

5. Command: Reject the false and embrace that which is true (21).

- John's farewell is not typical of letters. Yet, it is motivated by John's love for his readers: “Dear children...”
- This is the only command in this entire passage. The command is to “guard” or “keep” yourself from idols.
- An idol is anything that takes the place of God in your life.
 - What do you trust, obey, revere, love?
 - What is the “God-substitute” in your life?
- Since Jesus is true and he is the source of eternal life, anything less must be crushed.
- We must reject any imagination of God that is not true of him, any misrepresentation of God and worship the true and real God.

The Point: In this new year, stake your life on that which you know is true, namely, that life is found in the true God, Jesus Christ.

Conclusion:

- As I dream about this new year, I've already hit reset on a number areas of my life related to my physical health. I've responded to the knowledge that I learned around nutrition, exercise and weight loss and my hope is that this is the new me and not just a fad.
- Let me ask you: how will you respond this year to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and the Christian life? My hope and prayer for you is the same of John in his letter.
- Read 1 John 1:1-4