



The Case for Authentic Christianity

1 John 1:1-4 (pew Bible p. 1129)

- I. **1st John is a must-read book! Like every book it has a context. The background for this book is a philosophy called GNOSTICISM.**
 - A. Its dualistic teaching created at least three serious aberrations:
 1. Theological
 2. Moral
 3. Creation and the environment
- II. **Its intellectual hierarchy meant that you never had spiritual assurance. Hence John writes "we know..." almost 30 times in his short letter. John 1:1-4 gives us 4 circles for authentic Christianity.**
 - A. **HISTORICAL**
 1. Christian faith is rooted in history. It is tethered to the reality of Jesus Christ.
 - B. **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**
 1. John uses 4 phrases to describe personal experience:
 - a) what we have heard,
 - b) we have seen,
 - c) we have looked at,
 - d) our hands have handled.
 - C. **COMMUNAL**
 1. The purpose of the Gospel is community or *KOINONIA*. We are called into fellowship with God and with one another.
 - D. **EXPERIENTIAL**
 1. It is to bring the experience of joy into our lives!
 2. We may enter the Christian faith through one of these on-ramps, but our maturity comes as we move beyond the one we have entered and expand into experiencing the others. This is what moves us along the path of Christian growth.
 3. In the final analysis, Christianity is not a philosophy or an idea. It is about a person, whose name is Jesus!



The Case for Authentic Christianity

1 John 1:1-4 (pew Bible p. 1129)

Some questions for reflection and discussion:

1. Can you identify which of the four major "on-ramps" Tom Cowan described led you to know Christ? How did God use it in your life?
2. How has knowing Jesus brought joy into your life?
3. Some people today would say that it doesn't matter what you believe, so long as you are sincere. After having read 1 John 1:1-4, how might you respond to them?
4. How would you answer someone who said that they did not believe that Jesus was a real person?
5. If you met someone who said, "I believe in Jesus, but I have no need for the church", how would you reply to them?
6. How could we both deepen the reality and also strengthen the quality of *KOINONIA* in our churches today?