

## **Series Slide**

When Daniel Nayeri was a very young boy in Iran, his mother- Sima- Sima became a Christian- in full knowledge that it would endanger her life and the lives of her family.

So around 10 years old, he, his mother and his sister, fled the country and sought asylum in Oklahoma...as they barely escaped Iran with their lives.

He tells his story as an immigrant in Oklahoma, and about his days in Iran.. in his memoir "Everything Sad is Untrue", which is one of the most beautiful books I've read in a long time.

He did not have an easy life growing up. Obviously. His dad stayed in Iran...and eventually remarried and had another family. In Oklahoma, he was bullied...because being Persian in Oklahoma during the height of the Gulf War brought all sorts of racism. Particularly from a bully named Brandon Goff.

He tells the story in the Persian style of Sheherazade (shuh-hair-ah-ZAAD). Who is the Sultan's wife in Arabian Nights and has to tell a never ending story or so the Sultan will spare her life...in order to hear more of the story

There are some absolutely stunning lines of beauty in this book...and I want to share with you one of the most memorable for me.

**Would you rather a god who listens or a god who speaks?**

**Be careful with the answer.**

**It's as important as every word from Scheherazade's mouth that saved her life.**

**And everybody's got an answer.**

**A god who listens is like your best friend, who lets you tell him about all the people you don't like.**

**A god who speaks is like your best teacher, who tells Brandon Goff he has to leave the room if he's going to call people falafel monkeys.**

**A god who listens is your mom who lets you sit in a kitchen and tell her stories about castles in the mountains.**

**A god who speaks is your dad who calls on the phone with advice for your life in America.**

There are gods all over the world who just want you to express yourself. Look inside and find whatever you think you are and that's all it takes to be good. And there are gods who are so alien to us, with minds so clear, the only thing to do would be to sit at their feet and wait for them to speak, to tell us what is good.

A god who listens is love.  
A god who speaks is law.

At their worst, the people who want a god who listens are self-centered. they just want to live in the land of do-as-you-please. And the ones who want a god who speaks are cruel. They just want laws and justice to crush everything.

I don't have an answer for you. This is the kind of thing you live your whole life thinking about probably.

Love is empty without justice.  
Justice is cruel without love.

And sometimes,...you get neither.

Oh, and in case it wasn't obvious, the answer is both.  
God should be both.  
If a god isn't, that is no God.

- Daniel Nayeri, *Everything Sad is Untrue (A True Story)*

Today, we're starting a short series of messages from the New Testament letter of 1 John.

**Title Slide-“Logos of Zoe: How Jesus is the God Who Listens & Speaks”- 1 John 1:1-2:2**

The author is the same John who wrote the Gospel of John- one of Jesus' disciples. He's most likely writing to the church in Ephesus in response to a group of people who had recently left the church and denied that Jesus was the Son of God...and in so doing had created a lot of confusion and hostility. So John is writing to assure them that Jesus is, in fact, God...and did- in fact- do what he said he did. On top of all that- he is telling them that this is not just some detail to be memorized- rather to be lived out in such a way that it creates a deep bond of love with other believers that overflows into the world.

## **1 John 1:1-2:2**

**What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life —**

**2 that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us — 3 what we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.**

**5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him. 6 If we say, “We have fellowship with him,” and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth. 7 If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say, “We have not sinned,” we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.**

**1 My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father — Jesus Christ the righteous one.**

**2 He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.**

**Transition:** Today John is showing us the God who listens, and the God who speaks. A God of love, and a God of justice. He’s going to show us Jesus. But not just in a trivial way. Not just in a “here are the facts about Jesus” sort of way. Rather- he uses words like “Fellowship” “Joy” “Life”. In these passages John is showing us that Jesus is an objective reality- that

### **1) Jesus is Objective Truth that must be Subjectively Lived.**

Daniel’s mom, Sima, was a sayyed Muslim living in Iran. Basically, that means that she could trace her direct lineage back to the Prophet Muhammed. In Iran, if you were sayyed, you were essentially treated like royalty.

It was a capital crime to become a Christian in Iran. Punishable by death. There was an Islamic government group that was always on the lookout for rumors about Muslims becoming Xians so they could track those people down and kill them. So it was dangerous to even talk about Christianity.

Which probably makes you wonder- why in the world did Sima become a Christian?

Why put her family at risk? Why give up such an honorable position in her society?

Here's how Daniel answers that question.

**“When I tell the story in Oklahoma, this is the part where the grown-ups always interrupt me. they say “Okay, but WHY did she convert?”**

**Because up to that point, I've told them about the [wonderful] house we we lived in, all the villages my grandfather owned, all the gold, my mom's own medical practice- all the amazing things she had that we don't have anymore because she became a Christian.**

**All the money she gave up, so we're poor now.**

**But I don't have an answer for them.**

**How can you explain why you believe anything? So I just say what my mom says when people ask her.**

**She looks them in the eye with the ... hope that they'll hear her and she says,**

**“Because its true.”**

**Why else would she believe it?**

**Its true and its more valuable than seven million dollars in gold coins, and thousands of acres of Persian countryside, and ten years of education to get a medical degree, and all your family, and a home, and the best cream puff- and even maybe your life.**

**My mom wouldn't have made the trade otherwise. If you believe it's true, that there is a God and He wants you to believe in Him and He sent His Son to die for you—then it has to take over your life. It has to be worth more than everything else, because heaven's waiting on the other side.**

**That or Sima is insane.**

**There's no middle. You can't say it's a quirky thing she thinks sometimes, cause she went all the way with it.**

**If it's not true, she made a giant mistake.**

**But she doesn't think so.**

**She had all that wealth, the love of all those people she helped in her clinic. They treated her like a queen. She was a sayyed.**

**And she's poor now.**

**People spit on her on buses. She's a refugee in places people hate refugees. And she'll tell you —it's worth it. Jesus is better.**

**It's true.**

**We can keep talking about it, keep grinding our teeth on why Sima converted, since it turned the fate of everybody in the story. It's why we're here hiding in Oklahoma.**

**We can wonder and question and disagree. You can be certain she's dead wrong.**

**But you can't make Sima agree with you.**

**It's true.**

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

**This whole story hinges on it.**

Now- look what John writes.

**1 John 1:1-3a (end at declare to you)**

He opens this letter by focusing on the objective. Not a subjective experience or feeling. He is talking about what he saw and heard. As one of the disciples- in particular one of the disciples that was closest to Jesus- John witnessed not only the miracles of Jesus...and the incredible teaching- but more importantly, was there when Jesus was crucified—and he was there looking around Jesus' empty tomb on the first Easter Sunday. He was there when a resurrected Jesus entered the upper room, and ate grilled fish on the beach.

He saw Jesus die. And then he saw him alive. He was there when Jesus ascended to the heavens...he was there when thousands of people who spoke different languages all heard the apostles speaking their own language at Pentecost.

John did not merely have a good feeling about Jesus. He witnessed an objective reality. That Jesus died. Jesus resurrected. And Jesus promised that he's coming back to make the world new.

That's why there is all this emphasis in these first verses on the objective. John is saying- we, the disciples, witnessed all these things that Jesus said and did...namely his resurrection. And if a man dies, and resurrects...and tells you he's coming back to make the world new again- you believe him. Not simply because you have a good feeling about him...but because its true. It is objective reality.

Just like Sima- you don't try to figure out how much its going to cost you to believe it... as if objective truth can change based on how excited or bummed out you are because of it.

Everybody here knows, things don't change because we don't like them.

And things don't happen just because we really really want them to.

Every single one of us has to deal with the objective reality- the truth outside of us- in the world. You can scream, kick, shout, cry, close your eyes, cover your hears, clap your hands, say "I believe in fairies", cross your fingers and hope to die...but when you open your eyes- the truth outside of you will still be right there staring you in the face.

In these first verses, John is saying, "Listen- if you are doubting Jesus is true because your life has become hard because of him... you need to ask the question- Did a man who claimed to be God- the word- the son of God that was with God at the beginning of creation- Did that man die and then resurrect and leave us with instructions on who he was and how to follow him? Yes. Then there is no other way to live than what he says. Just because its not pleasant in the moment, does not change that objective reality."

The evidence for the historical, objective reality of Jesus, his crucifixion by a Roman government- and then his resurrection and subsequent birth of a movement in his name- that objective evidence is overwhelming.

In fact, just about the only evidence the other way is the idea that, "We really haven't ever seen anybody resurrect." Which- is just our subjective personal experience, not necessarily historical evidence that Jesus did not.

But, notice here, John is not just wanting this Ephesian church to believe a set of objective facts. He wants them to take it in- ask, “What does it mean that all of this stuff with Jesus happened?,” and then he wants them to subjectively respond to it.

### **1:3-4**

He says he wants them to take this truth in...and mull it over...meditate on it...and the result is fellowship with God and his church. In other words, a relationship- with trust, and feelings...joy and love...is the result.

### **v 1b (concerning the word of life)- & v 4**

Notice that he calls Jesus the “word of life” something he called Jesus in the prologue in the gospel of John. That is a great summation of the way Xianity works.

If someone talks to you, it is something being said from outside of you. Something you don't have control over, no matter what you want a person to say to you...they just speak. And that word enters your ears- and then you have to process it...think it over... and decide how you are going to respond. How will you live...or how will change your life in order to respond to that word.

Its the objective effecting the subjective.

For instance- if someone yells “Fire!”- you have to take that word in...and then subjectively adjust your life accordingly.

The Greek word here is LOGOS of ZOE.

The LOGOS for the Greeks is a philosophical term that essential meant- “The meaning of life”. Greek philosophers were always trying to understand WHAT the Logos was. John comes along here and in his gospel and says- the meaning of life is a person. The objective truth is a person that you can subjectively love. You can hug the TRUTH. Not your truth...the TRUTH.

Zoe or LIFE- is a subjective reality. Meaning- the malaise you are in, the boredom, the disappointment- the “I've chased the end of all these rainbows, climbed all these corporate ladders, won all the trophies...and still, I have a BLEH taste in my mouth”- John is saying it is in knowing- personally, subjectively, this TRUTH- that you will finally have joy. All of that incomplete chasing of joy, in Jesus you will find joy's completion. LIFE.

And that life will be eternal. the word “Eternal” for John- is not merely a length of time. It is a quality.

## **Back to 1)**

In other words- once you see and believe Jesus is who he is because its true- Jesus, the crucified and risen messiah is LORD...it cannot just be theological fact for you to get the right answer on a Bible test.

It has to come in, and at all costs, change the way you live. There is a personal, subjective relationship- a fellowship- that now results. An intimacy- that will have you fleeing Iran with your family, or like John eventually- being exiled in prison on an island..and yet all along- because its objectively true that Christ has died, risen and is coming again- its all worth it and there is joy in having that hope- even as you suffer.

Like Daniel said. If Christ has died, risen, and is coming again- it has to change your whole life. And here is what that life looks like.

## **2) Life with the Truth is a walk. We are changed slowly in a Relationship that is Intimate, Confessional, Invitational & Hopeful.**

Remember what Daniel wrote about us needing a God who speaks and listens?

He said a God who speaks represents justice. Declaring truth. Setting things right. Telling the bullies to back off.

A God who listens represents love. The shoulder you can lean on. Like his mother in the kitchen empathizing with his pain and rejoicing in his victories.

Daniel said, and so does the Bible, that only the True God can do both.

### **1:7**

Here, and in many other places throughout both the Old and New Testaments- a relationship with God is described as a walk.

Walking is a very relational activity. Think about it. Often- when you want to talk to someone- you ask- “can we go for a walk?” Walking is so slow. Even the most introverted person on a walk feels the need to talk. Or to listen.

That is as true in John’s day, as it is today.

Walking is a way to describe a relational life.

So, let me show you quickly some characteristics of WALKING with JESUS.

### **Walking with Jesus is Intimate.**



Its 2 way communication. Very basically- Jesus primarily speaks to us, reveals himself- in the Bible. There is a way to historically know the objective truth that Jesus died and resurrected, but without knowing what he says about it- I dont really have a good way to interpret it. But in the Bible, I understand the LOGOS- the meaning of his death and resurrection. On the cross, Jesus was taking the hit for my sin. His blood cleanses me from the guilt and shame of my treason against my creator. The Bible helps me to understand in a thousand ways how this plays out in my life.

But, Just like we want to hear from God, God wants to hear from us. Any good relationship has a rhythm of speaking and listening. That is what prayer is. Its how we express our grief, our hope, our gratitude, our worry and fear, our requests, our satisfaction- all to God.

Jesus is the God who listens and speaks. Participation in that means I make it a slow, walking kind of habit...to read the Scripture..and pray.

Let me ask you, do you only think of prayer as something to do when you need something? This is a sign of anemic one way relationship with God. When you're walking with someone- you are mining the depths of the way you think and feel and sharing those...you aren't just listing things that you want from that person.

God wants to speak to you, through Scripture. And he wants to hear from you. He's intimate...not just an ATM or a Spiritual Gumball machine where you put in a quarter of prayer, turn the lever, and get what you want.

This is where the practice of meditation...and journaling come in. You read the Scripture, turn it over in your head...and then respond in prayer. **HEAR JOURNAL.**

### **Walking with Jesus is Confessional.**

John writes here that Jesus is light. And you know, when you turn on light- all the things that the darkness used to hide...well they show up.

In other words, when you walk in the light- slowly, bit by bit, Jesus is going to change you. He's going to change your character. He's going to shape your desires. Remember- walking is slow. and often doesn't seem like you are going very far. But suddenly, you can look up after a long conversation and realize- wow- I'm a long way from where I started. And in that walk- you may feel some fatigue, even some soreness, but its all building you up, making you stronger- more like the Jesus you're walking with.

But that means, exposure. Jesus is going to kindly and gently- as you read Scripture- as you interact with his church- he's going to point out things that he aren't congruent with

living life with him. Sin. And he says, Your response can be defensive. You can ignore it, but as long as you are walking in the light- the evidence will be plain. You will have to break fellowship...to walk away from him...if you want to disagree with him about what you get to keep in your life and what he's calling you to get rid of.

### **v 6 & 8**

Listen, the fact that Jesus died on the cross- and has forgiven us of all our sin- doesn't mean that we don't still sin. But bit by bit, as we walk with Jesus- Jesus changes us- helps us to live more and more into the people he has called us to be. And that means the painful process of revealing our sin. When that sin is revealed you have 2 choices. Confess- which just means to "Speak with" or "say the same thing" or Agree with God about your sin- or you can hide it, retreat to the darkness- get defensive and cover it up.

Often- you might think that walking with Jesus means never acknowledging sin... because thats over and done with and now you are a good person. But actually, walking with the God who has already said, "I have forgiven you and nothing you can do will change that" gives us incredible boldness to be honest about our sin. To say "I'm sorry. I love you. And I'm ready for you to change me."

### **Walking with Jesus is Invitational**

Notice all the talk of fellowship in these verses. The Greek word is Koinania. It means having things in common. Sharing together. Participating together.

### **v 3-4**

First, there is Koinania with God the Father and God the Son through God the Spirit. When you see Jesus for who he is, and you believe him about his work on the cross for your forgiveness- he gives you the Holy Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit is to let you participate in the LOVE of this trinitarian God. You are invited into the inner circle that overflowed to create the entire Cosmos. Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Comforter. The Holy Spririt reminds us that we are children of God...and that Christ has done everything necessary to forgive us and adopt us into God's family.

That means that we are invited into the church- the family a God.

### **v7**

Verse 7 says if we walk in the Light- we also have fellowship with one another.

In other words, there is no such thing as a Lone Ranger Christian. there is no such thing as just "me and Jesus". If you are walking with Jesus you are ever invited into relationships with others...as you invite others in.

## **v 4**

Notice that John says- I'm telling you about Jesus- about his cross and resurrection- about how sure and steady a walking partner he is- so that OUR JOY maybe complete.

It means that you never just want Jesus to yourself. Like the Trinity- there is always a sense of "Lets not keep this love, and trust, and comfort and fellowship just for us." John says, MY joy is incomplete until you guys also come into this relationship with Jesus with me.

This is why we have our City Church Pillars that we not only cultivate relationships in the worship gathering and community groups- but we also share the gospel and make disciples. thats invitational. Come walk with Jesus together.

### **Walking with Jesus is Hopeful.**

What you believe about the future, will change how you live in the present.

Daniel's Mom Sima- went through hell and back- just because she believed that Jesus died and resurrected and is coming back again.

If that doesn't produce an ultimate hope. A hope that God will make Everything Sad Come Untrue...a hope that justice will be done. A hope that God both speaks and listens. that he is both love and justice. That he doesn't just make the road to ultimate destruction a little brighter along the way some positivity...if that's all you have, Sima, and honestly all the disciples- would have given up.

But because all along the walk, as we listen to Jesus, and as we talk to Jesus about our fears and joys...he's saying all along- "I'm making all things new."

As Paul says, "This light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory that is beyond comparison. As our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. And one day, what Jesus does to our inner selves- will be done outwardly- to our bodies- and to the whole objective world." Behold, he says, I am making all things new.

Walking with Jesus produces a great confidence to endure trials- because the future he's promised- with God and others- is beautifully, unstoppable.

And you know how you can know this?

Jesus resurrected and promised it.

Now look at

**v 9 & 2:1b -2(start at “but if anyone)**

This is how you can be sure- no matter how much sin Jesus exposes sin, or no how much suffering you have to go through as you walk with him- that he has included you- invited you to this wonderful hope.

Some of you may read these verses and think- well- I guess its God’s job to be merciful. And so he forgives me because that just a part of what he has to do. So I just keep coming back to God...begging for his forgiveness...saying “I’ve messed up again... won’t you just overlook it again. One more time. I’ll do better. I swear.”

But that’s not what these verses say. They don’t say God is mericiful- those that is true.

They say is faithful & righteous- that word “righteous” means just. Or justified.

Meaning that his forgiveness of you is BASED on his Justice.

this means that him forgiving you is not him OVERLOOKING JUstice- rather...its the just, or right thing to do

This is the God who both hears and speaks.

He hears us...he hears our need for a savior. He hears us lost without joy. He hears us drowning in our failure and shame and disconnect. He sees us. And he became a man in Jesus. he experienced the brokenness that came from our sin. Even death. He is a God who hears us. He sympathizes with us. He is faithful. Full of God’s Love.

It’s not Gods job to overlook sin...or he’s not a God of justice. He would only be a God who listens. If he can’t make everything right...he would not be God. He was so holy, he had to punish sin, but he was so merciful he was willing to come and take the punishment himself. that’s his mercy. His mercy is that he took on the condemnation and shame for our sin.

That makes him righteous to forgive us.

Its not thinking of God as someone who just petites you and makes an exception that changes your life. But the recognition of a God who, like Slma, left riches untold, to step into suffering. It was this costly mercy that cost him everything, cost him his life ... That gives you an inner security & hope that no matter what you leave behind in following Jesus- you get it all back...in spades.

Jesus is the advocate. He's the cosmic defense attorney that says "I do not ask for mercy for my clients. I demand justice. I have died, and therefore, my Father will receive them forever. Not to do so would be unjust."

Do you know what that is? That's an infallible case. That's not one more day God saying, "I'll let you off this time, but don't let it happen again...or else." This is the justice of God. The infallible righteousness of God now is all on your side.

You know where you see this God of Hope beautifully. Luke tells the story of Jesus on the cross. Like a refugee on a bus- he's being spit at etc.

He hears "Remember me when you come into your kingdom"

Speaks "Today you will be with me in paradise."

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