

1 John – God is Love: Week One

What it Means to Have Fellowship

Day One: John's Purpose for Writing – Fellowship and Joy

Read 1 John 1:1-4

The Apostle John tells us in his very first verse, that he has been with Jesus. He knew Him well. It was his intention to pass on (John is an old man living in Ephesus at the time of this writing), what he had actually experienced. John had heard Jesus teach, he had seen Jesus heal the sick and work numerous miracles. He had touched Jesus with his own hands. And now, he felt compelled to share some thoughts (in addition to writing his Gospel) with his fellow believers in the young Christian church. (Example – Luke 6:13-18)

Christianity was only about 50 years old. The first century was almost over, and all of the other apostles had died as martyrs. John was the last surviving apostle. The New Testament had not yet been compiled, so, although there were copies of the letters written by Paul, Peter, and James and others circulating among the towns and villages, there was no New Testament. It wasn't until AD367 that Bishop Athanasius compiled the first known list of the current 27 books of the New Testament.

John's own recollection of the teachings of Jesus and his memories of all of the things Jesus did, were priceless for the young believers. No one else could say these things with the authority that John could. He had been with Jesus.

**“We have seen and testify and proclaim to you”
“What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you”**

John tells us that he is simply sharing or testifying to what he knows to be true based on his personal experiences. Along with testify, he uses the word, “proclaim”.

The verb, “proclaim” according to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, means “to say or state something in a public, official, or definite way. To declare or announce something.” If you or I tell someone about our own experience or encounter with Jesus, we could also say we are proclaiming based on our own experience, what we know is true. God wants us to proclaim or testify about Him. This will bring Him honor and glory.

John is proclaiming in Chapter One to the people in both his day and ours, that there are two very special reasons why he is writing this letter.

Re-read 1 John 1:3-4

Locate the 2 times that John uses the words, “so that” to indicate his purpose.

1. What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that

_____, and
indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

2. These things we write so that

_____.

Take another look at those 2 reasons John gave for writing this letter. In your own words, write out what John’s stated purpose is:

_____.

If you and I share with each other our own faith stories or testimonies, it will bring us into closer fellowship with each other and also draw us closer to the Father and the Son. And when we share God’s Word with one another, our joy is made complete, or fulfilled. Isn’t that true? Have you ever been with a sister-in-Christ who shared with you a powerful faith experience? Stories of how we came to know Jesus personally, how he has healed us of both physical and emotional wounds. I could tell you stories of how He has delivered me from fear and anxiety. Others have a story about God’s deliverance from substance abuse and other addictions. We all can tell about how God has shown us His love, His mercy, and how He has filled us with His Holy Spirit. Wouldn’t you love to hear some of these great stories? Let’s have the courage to “proclaim” them to each other!

As we work thru this five-week study, one of our goals is to share as many faith stories as possible with each other. Let’s follow John’s lead and be willing to testify to what we have seen, heard or touched of God’s divine Love. Why? So that we would all have fellowship with each other and with the Father and His Son. And secondly, so that our joy will be made complete!

**“That you too may have fellowship with us”
“Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”**

What is Fellowship? The Vine’s Greek Dictionary tells us that our word “fellowship” comes from the Greek word “koinonia” which is “to share what one has in anything, a participation, having a common partnership, fellowship”.

Let’s look up 2 other places where the word, “koinonia” is used in the New Testament and fill in the blanks.

1 Corinthians 1:9 We were all called into fellowship (koinonia) with _____.

Acts 2:42 They (the early church) were continually devoting themselves to the apostles _____ to fellowship (koinonia), to the _____ and to _____.

John wants all believers to experience the amazing fellowship that he had with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. He said that when we all come together in “koinonia”, this unity of the Spirit, this loving relationship, only then only then.....will His joy be complete, and ours also. Our joy will not be perfected, or fulfilled, until we are experiencing this type of fellowship.

These things we write so that our joy may be made complete.

Our Creator has made us in such a way that **fellowship and joy** are linked together.

“The former (fellowship) stands related to the latter (joy) as does cause to effect, a tree to its fruit, the means to an end. As the measure of our fellowship with the Father and the Son determines the measure of our communion with fellow saints, so in proportion to the constancy and depth of this fellowship will be the degree of our joy.” (Arthur Pink)

Joy is something to be shared. It is a mutual delight. When we are in fellowship with God and with fellow believers, we will experience “chara”, the greek word for “joy”. When we sin, we break fellowship and quench our joy. But don’t despair - Jesus guides us back to fellowship when we confess our sin.

Here are a few things that I think you need to know about joy:

1. If you are uncertain about your salvation and your acceptance into God's family, if you don't understand how valuable you are - you will not experience joy. The way to fix this is to immerse yourself in God's Word until you know in your heart that you truly are loved by God. If you aren't sure yet, spend some time in prayer and talk it over with God. You can trust Him to tell you the Truth. (Remember, the enemy wants to deceive you into thinking the Word of God is not true.)
2. Humans look for happiness in the wrong places. "*Soul, take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.*" Luke 12:19 People look for happiness in things they achieve (pride of life), and material possessions. But the reality is, after you have achieved your new status or bought your new thing, the happiness will wear off, and you will crave a new status or new thing to make you happy. These temporal things are just temporal! There is no lasting effect.

But spiritual joy is lasting. It will comfort us during times of sickness as well as health. We will continue to experience joy whether we are wealthy or poor, in financial trouble or not. The joy that we have comes from only one source - the Holy Spirit. The joy is not based on our status or our things. Our joy is not based on circumstances found in this world.

Look up the following verses in Philippians and record what they teach us about joy.

Philippians 1:3-5 _____

Philippians 1:23-25 _____

Philippians 2:1-2 _____

Philippians 2:17-18 _____

Philippians 2:27-29 _____

Philippians 4:1-4 _____

Did you know that you were on Jesus's mind when He was dying on the cross?

Hebrews says it like this, *“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, **who for the joy set before Him endured the cross**, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Hebrews 12:1b-2

This is the truth...The “joy that was set before Jesus” was you! You were on His mind - and He calls you “His joy”. He was picturing the wonderful fellowship He would have with you, once He had redeemed you by His blood. Joy and fellowship are linked together, and are not based on happiness, or circumstances that are necessarily favorable. But they are based on the eternal promises.

*“In this you greatly **rejoice**, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly **rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory**, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”* 1 Peter 1:6-9

What a wonderful thought for our first day of study! Let’s make it our goal to share with each other and experience the fellowship with the Father and the Son!