

True Fellowship

1 John 1:5-7

We've spent the time on the introduction of 1 John and began the study into the book last week. Last week we looked at chapter 1, verses 1-4. We saw in verse 4 that one of the reasons John wrote this book is *"that your joy may be full."*

In speaking of this joy, we understand that it's not happiness, but a deeper reality of joy that John desires that we experience in our relationship with Jesus. But, as we press on into this study, we are also going to find that our relationship with each other is of utmost importance for the Christian.

God is concerned that both our vertical and our horizontal relationships be right and healthy. John writes a lot about fellowship and loving the brethren. But before we get too far along, let's look at what John wrote.

Since we didn't get too far last week, let's go ahead and back up to the beginning of chapter 1 and read through to verse 7...

1 John 1

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-- ² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- ³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

Again, we see that John is speaking of the experiential relationship he had with Jesus Christ, spending time and sharing life with Him for 3 ½ years – *"...that which we have seen and heard we declare to you..."*

Now, let's look at verses 5-7

*⁵ This is the message **which we have heard from Him and declare to 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 practice the truth. ⁷ *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

These are the things John has heard personally from Jesus - *which we have heard from Him*. What he is about to tell us isn't an exact quote from anything we have in any of the Gospels, but we also need to remember it was John himself who shared with us at the very end of his Gospel account that there was **so much more to the ministry of Jesus** that wasn't written down or recorded –

John 21

25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

But **these things**, John attests to have heard from the Lord Himself and here he wants to *declare it to us*. And one of the first things he shares is that *that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all*.

This would seem to be a “*no-brainer*”, but some have missed this point completely. Some in the past and even currently believe and teach that God is the creator of both good and evil, light and darkness, even the whole idea of the yin-yang – the opposing, complimentary forces of both good and evil (the Star Wars concept of “*the Force*”), light and darkness – cupped inside of each other and each having equal strength. Even in Chinese Taoism the distinctions between good and bad are only perception, not real; so, this **perceived duality** of yin and yang, good and evil, and light and darkness are actually an indivisible whole – each requiring the other to exist.

But, that is not the reality of the God of the Bible. Because Jehovah, God Almighty, the great “*I Am*” existed before all things and created all things. We find that evil and darkness exist only where and when there is a void in the active presence of God; much in the same way that **darkness only exists when there's no light**. Remember, it is the **presence of light which drives out darkness**. Light always prevails over darkness. No one to my knowledge has ever **invented a “flash-dark”**, where you turn it on and it pushes or drives all light from a room.

And Beloved, you also need to see that there's no darkness so great but that the smallest of sources of light cannot prevail.

God Almighty is not a divided force or some sort of a *force* carrying both light and darkness. John wanted to let the Church know that God is not only **the** source of light, He, Himself is light, and in His presence *there is no darkness at all*.

He is holy and in His presence, evil cannot stand.

Because of that very truth John goes on to warn us, "*If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and **walk in darkness**, we lie and do not practice the truth.*"

If we say we have a relationship with the Lord; that we are walking in His presence, yet our lives are filled with darkness (and let's just call that what it is – it's sin, walking in sin! But, John will bring that out in a bit); John says that if that is the case in our lives, we are liars and we're definitely not living in the truth.

The fact is, every time we walk in sin (walk in the flesh), we are **effectively shutting off the Light of His presence**, in order that sin might prevail in our lives – you can't have both.

The Apostle Paul told us in Romans 8

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

To help you in understanding what I mean, bear with me in a little bit of *Pastor David's New, Modern Transliteration*:

"As Believer, for those who live according to the flesh, they have shut off the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. But those who live according to the Spirit continue to let the light and power of the Holy Spirit prevail in their lives. For to be carnally minded is to be walking in darkness, and that walk leads to death. But to be spiritually minded is walking in the light, and that walk will bring you life and peace. ⁷ Because the darkness is an enemy set against God; because

it resists the Light of God. So then, when you walk in darkness, you cannot please God.”

Don't hang me as a heretic for misquoting the Bible, simply understand what I'm saying: the concept of what John writes in 1 John is right in line with what Paul writes to the Romans.

On a more positive note, back here in 1 John, John goes on to say –

*⁷ But if we **walk** in the light as He is in the light, we have **fellowship** with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

To walk in the light means that we are **walking in obedience to the move and work of the Holy Spirit and to the plan and precepts of God in His Word...** to walk in the light means we are **walking in obedience**. When this happens, you and I as Believers in Jesus Christ can have fellowship (*Koinonia*), with each other and with Christ.

John uses that word **fellowship or koinonia four times** in these opening verses –

*³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have **fellowship** with us; and truly our **fellowship** is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

*⁶ If we say that we have **fellowship** with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*

*⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have **fellowship** with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

We looked last week at the meaning of that word **fellowship** or *koinonia*. If you remember, it's much more than sharing a meal together, it truly is the idea of living life together. As I shared last week:

Koinonia carries with it the understanding of **community**. Community was important to both the Greek and the Jew. *Koinonia* was the idea of “*sharing in*”, “*in participation with*”. For the Greeks, *Koinonia* was the supreme expression of friendship.

Throughout the culture, *koinonia* showed a common-union in life: a partnership in work and a brotherhood in religious life. ¹

But not only *koinonia*, John places a **huge emphasis on brotherly love**. As we go through this book we are going to see his emphasis stated over and over again. We won't go in depth with them now, but follow along with me as we look at some of John's references to **our relationship as brothers (and by inference as "sisters")**:

2:9-11

*He who says he is in the light, and **hates his brother**, is in darkness until now. He who **loves his brother** abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who **hates his brother** is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the **darkness has blinded his eyes**.*

3:10

*In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is **he who does not love his brother**.*

3:14-17

*We know that we have passed from death to life, because **we love the brethren**. He who **does not love his brother abides in death**. Whoever **hates his brother is a murderer**, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also **ought to lay down our lives for the brethren**. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees **his brother in need**, and shuts up his heart from him, **how does the love of God abide in him?***

4:20-21

*If someone says, "I love God," and **hates his brother, he is a liar**; for he who **does not love his brother** whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that **he who loves God must love his brother also**.*

Then lastly, but of **very great importance**,

5:16

If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.

¹ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 448.

We could easily ask the question, “**Who is my brother?**” and go back to Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan, but I believe that in the **context of what John is writing** here, he is speaking primarily about our relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ, fellow Believers. This isn’t to disregard the need to care for those around us, but with the understanding that our acts of love **begin in the Household of Faith**.

One other thing we need to see and grasp in this letter is the number of times John **uses the word *love, loved or loves***. Throughout the book of 1 John, he uses the word *love* a total of over 45 times in 26 different verses.

That’s a whole lotta love!

Granted, some of those usages are in reference to our *love* for God or in a negative way: **our *love* for the world or the things of the world**. But the majority of the usage of *love* relates to our *love* for **one another**. As a matter of fact John uses that phrase *one another* six times... and in all but one he is specifically saying *love one another*. And in that one, he is speaking about having *fellowship with one another*.

In every case, John uses a form of the Greek word ***agape*: the self-sacrificial love, a pardoning love, a love that is defined in the words of 1 Corinthians 13** – it suffers long and is kind; does not envy; it doesn’t parade itself, it isn’t puffed up, doesn’t behave rudely, doesn’t seek its own, it’s not provoked, and thinks no evil; this kind of love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ***Agape*** love never fails.

This is the *love* we are called to have for *one another*. This is when true *Koinonia* or Fellowship begins to happen as John defines it.

Ladies, many of you know **1 John 4:7-8** by heart, because I know that Tot uses it in her Women’s Bible Studies on a regular basis –

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knoweth God. He who loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. Beloved, let us love one another. 1 John 4:7-8

Going back to chapter 1, verse 7 John clearly tells us –

⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

As I shared earlier, we should understand clearly that *walking in the light* is “a faithful walk of obedience and surrender to the plans and purposes of God... being obedient to the move and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.” John tells us that **IF** that is the case in our lives, **then and only then** will we have the kind of *fellowship* with one another God has planned and purposed for us.

But what does that **look like in the practical world?**

What does it look like when I **put skin on the word and concept of Christian Fellowship?**

For us here at Calvary Casa Grande, we have seen this kind of relationship throughout the years in an *on again / off again* way. Right now we are starting to see it happen in some of the **242 Life Groups**. People are starting to connect on a **more than just a surface level**. We have seen it in **some cases in our Men’s and Women’s studies** and in the **Prime Time group**. But as good as each of those are we still have a long way to go.

I was reminded of a time **early on in our married life when Tot and I experienced this kind of *Koinonia* in a powerful way**. We were at a Church where we connected with a group of couples who had children about the same age as ours; they were going through the same situations of life as ours; we were all experiencing some of the same victories... **and some of the same struggles**.

I know I’m exaggerating a little when I borrow the opening words from Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*: “*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.*”

But it was good... and it was hard at the same time.

It was good because we were **growing spiritually together – true “Iron sharpening iron”**. We had a Couple’s Bible Study that we loved being a part of because we were **challenged in our spiritual growth and at the same time we laughed together**.

It was the best of times because we could call each other up at the spur of the moment and do things together – sometimes as families with children..., sometimes as couples..., and other times just a couple of the guys or a few of the girls.

Sunday after church someone always had a pot of something brewing or a roast cooking or they knew where to get a bucket of chicken and they would invite you over for lunch..., or invite that brand new family or individual over for lunch. There was an organic form of outreach happening that didn’t need to be programmed.

We weren’t all the same: we had different backgrounds, different incomes, different jobs and family issues, but somehow we were able to work through those differences and enjoy the company of each other.

But it was also hard, hard because we truly, deeply cared for each other. When one brother or sister suffered, we suffered with them. We walked together through troubled pregnancies, job lay-offs, “stupid kid tricks”, and medical issues.

It was hard because we had our hearts open to each other and sometimes in the course of life **our hearts got wounded**.

- Words spoken before the brain was engaged,
- Actions taken without knowing all the facts,
- Disappointments because we had wrong expectations.

You see, real *Koinonia* can get messy at times. involves all of your emotions. There has to be an investment beyond the comfortable. There has to be a vulnerability that opens you up for great joy AND great agony. You cannot have one without the other. Real and deep love exposes you to the possibility of real and deep pain – and the sorrow is, some don’t want to go that deep.

But you need to remember, real *Koinonia* also brings with it the joy of acceptance, the healing process of hearts united in purpose, a deep and true connection with those on

similar journey. It challenges you in your walk with Christ to grow deeper in love with the Savior and be found in Him. True *Koinonia* will bring those alongside of you who will *strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees* (Isa 35:3).

But be assured, real and true *Koinonia* will cost you.

It will stretch you out of your comfort zone.

It will be inconvenient.

It will call for personal sacrifice.

You will need to love the unlovely.

There needs to be a purposeful walk of true and honest forgiveness.

You will need to be willing to receive and to accept godly and biblical correction from a brother or sister who has earned the right through their continued actions of love and concern.

As iron sharpens iron, friction happens. With friction comes heat. And with heat comes discomfort, but the sharpening process will never be complete without it.

All of this John calls out for, for you and I as the Church... *that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ...*

He calls out for you and I as the Church to remember...*if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we will have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

We mess up, there's no doubt about that, but for you and I to completely and fully experience the cleansing power of Christ in our lives, to walk in the fullness of understanding of the power of His sacrifice for us, is a spiritual release that cannot be compared with "*head knowledge theology*".

This kind of understanding doesn't come from a classroom seminar; it only comes when we personally know that cleansing power of the blood of the Lamb.

The old hymn asked the question:

Are you washed in the blood, in the soul cleansing blood of the Lamb?

Are your garments spotless are they white as snow?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

When we are walking in the light, when we are experiencing the Fellowship both with the Father and the Son, as well as with the Body of Believers, we can fully experience the reality of the cleansing power of Christ in our lives.

Ah, but what if I still sin? Well, that's next week.

1 John is challenging me, and I hope and pray it will be challenging to each of us.