

Christian Fellowship



Let's take a look at what the bible has to say about fellowship.

We will learn from our scripture in 1 John 1 what Christian fellowship is and with whom we share it. More importantly we will see what causes our fellowship to break down. When fellowship does break it often leaves us feeling isolated, cold and distant from the Lord, and from one another.

Something is just not right – have you been there, I know I have?

Let me ask you:

- How is your personal relationship with Jesus this morning?
- Are you experiencing the same joy and intimacy with the Lord as when you were first saved, first rescued and redeemed from Satan, sin and death?

If you *have* lost intimacy and *joy* in the Lord and don't feel a close to Him as you once did - well guess who moved away!

However, in all seriousness be encouraged, as our bible verse in 1 John 1 will bring comfort in truth; correction in error and counsel to restore that which may have been broken. God's word for us today is so applicable and practical, it will help us focus on how to maintain the joy and intimacy in all our relationships.

1 John chapter 1: 3-4 *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make your joy complete.*

What is Christian fellowship?

The New Testament word in Greek for fellowship is *Koinonia*.

The sense of the word is:

- Having communion together
- Sharing what we have in common
- Experiencing deep and meaningful relationships
- Living in unity with the Father, the Son and with one another, enabled by the Holy Spirit living in us and moving amongst us.

Why did the Apostle John write this 1st Epistle?

John offers 3 reasons why he wrote to the early church.

1. **1:4** *We write this to make your joy complete.*
2. **2:1** *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin...*
3. **5:13** *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

The Apostle John knew the heresies (mainly about the person and Deity of Jesus Christ and their misunderstanding of humanity and divinity) which false teachers were introducing into the early church and would cause believers to lose their joy; to misjudge the impact that personal sin has on fellowship and to lack assurance of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

Destructive heresies will have the same effect on our fellowship today.

- Is your joy in the Lord complete this morning?
- Are you always open and candid before God?
- Do you have assurance of eternal life?

These are important questions which determine how we experience fellowship together.

So far so good?

OK, if we understand what fellowship is, what then will break it – apart from COVID-19?

Let's continue on in **1 John 1:5-7**

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

⁶If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.

⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

It helps to understand the metaphor of light used in these verses.

- Walking in the light is often used by the Apostle John to mean renouncing sin and following Jesus, who said: **John 8:12** ...*"I am the Light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life"*.
- God's light is truth and to walk in the light is to live a life of truth. Disciples of Jesus fervently desire to walk and live in God's truth.

Psalm 119:105 *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*

Psalm 119:11 *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

As cold is the absence of heat, darkness is the absence of light (truth) and if we walk in darkness, we live a lie and deceive ourselves. Therefore we need God's word in our lives (actually hidden in our hearts) to live a life of truth and walk in the light as He is in the light.

John goes on to say **1:8** *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

We know and understand that placing our faith, trust and hope in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, will save us from the Day of Judgement and that all sin past, present and future is forgiven through His shed blood on the cross, but does God's grace mean that we will never sin again? The Apostle Paul answers this question for us.

Romans 6:1-2 *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?*

¹²Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires.

The practice of walking in truth in a fallen world is a process and we cannot do it alone, we need the indwelling Spirit to comfort, guide and help us overcome the carnal nature we inherited from the first Adam.

It may help to recall the scene at last supper when Jesus washed the disciple's feet:

John 13:8-10 *No said Peter "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean.*

The primary illustration in washing the disciple's feet is one of humility to serve but another illustration is that of picking up sin as we walk along the dusty roads of life and our feet need regular washing to keep them clean.

Jesus illustrated that the disciples are washed and saved by their confession of faith in Him. However, those things which happen along the road of life must also be confessed and washed clean to keep us in a right relationship.

'Salvation' therefore, is a one-time act of justification by faith, but the life-long process of 'sanctification' is one of washing from the stain of personal sin we experience as we walk in a fallen and corrupt world.

Our salvation is never in question but the joy and intimacy of fellowship is!

Let me illustrate the effect of unconfessed personal sin: It's like standing inside a room at a window on a very cold but sunny day. The sun shines through the glass and gives us light and heat. However, if you close the curtains, the

room becomes dark and you quickly feel cold; unconfessed sin is like the curtain which excludes the light and warmth of the Son!

Therefore, John encourages and counsels us to be honest with God and confess those things which break fellowship.

⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

APPLICATION: the message for us today and until we stand in the presence of the Lord, is to agree with God, as and when we fall short of His glory not if! Confessing our need of a fresh touch from His Spirit to keep our fellowship intimate and filled with joy.

The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth and convict us of when we miss the mark (*hamartano* - an archery term).

You can fill your own of missing the mark!

We then have a God given opportunity to agree with Him (*homologeo* - that's what confession means, to say the same thing). Our confession includes turning away from and returning to the Lord. We need to know what God has to say in His word to be able to agree with Him!

Lamentations 3:22-23 *Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

Amen