

A Loving Call To Fellowship A Survey of 1 John

Countryside Bible Chapel
May 20, 2007

1 John is a Book For Our Time

- Advanced in years, John wrote this fatherly epistle out of loving concern for his “children”
 - “little children” used 6 times
 - “beloved” used 5 times
- Their steadfastness in the truth of the Word was threatened by the
 - Lure of **worldliness**, and the
 - Guile of **false teachers**
- God desires to have a loving relationship with His children
- John admonishes us on the need for believers to remain in fellowship with their heavenly Father encourages us with God’s provision to remain in fellowship

Let’s take the time to prepare for this series of messages by diligently reading 1 John on our own – it is a relatively short book, but filled with insight on how to live fulfilled lives as God’s children

The Overriding Theme of 1 John is Fellowship With God

Focus	Basis of Fellowship		Behaviors of Fellowship			
	1:1	2:27	2:28			5:21
Divisions	Conditions for Fellowship	Cautions to Fellowship	Characteristics of Fellowship	Consequences of Fellowship		
	1:1 2:14	2:15 2:27	2:28	5:3	5:4	5:21
Topics	Meaning of Fellowship		Manifestations of Fellowship			
	Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love			
Place	Written in Ephesus after the Gospel of John					
Time	c. AD 90					

John Was Likely Writing To Christians in Asian Congregations Who Were Well Grounded in Apostolic Doctrine

- *Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. (2:7)*
- *I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are be strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (2:12-14)*
- *I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. (2:21)*
- *As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. (2:24)*
- *For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning ,that we should love one another; (3:11)*

Out of Concern That His “Children” Were Being Threatened By Worldliness and False Teachers, John Wrote in Order to:

- **Promote fellowship**
 - John proclaimed to his readers what he and others had seen and heard of eternal life **so that they too would have fellowship with God** (1:3)
- **Produce happiness**
 - John reminded his readers that he shared the certainty of his witness of Christ in order **to make our joy complete** (1:4)
- **Protect holiness**
 - John reminded his readers of the reality and seriousness of their sin, but also that, through confession of sin, we can restore the fellowship with God that is broken when we sin (1:5-10)
 - John then said that he wrote these things **so that we indeed, would not sin** (2:1)
- **Provide assurance**
 - John wrote in endearing terms to believer, those who already know the truth (2:12-14) so that they might have **assurance of salvation** (5:13)

John's Message is Credible Because He Was an Eyewitness to the Truth

1:1-3

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 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.

4:14

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

- **A revelation has been made in terms men can understand, and the results are abiding**
- **He is concerned with the historic, objective, and tangible manifestation of the eternal**
- **Vouches for his message from his own personal experience**
- **His witness is reliable (e.g., 2 Peter 1:16) and verified by hearing, sight, and touch**

John Declares the Truth With Authority and Sternly Denounces Error, Yet With Love

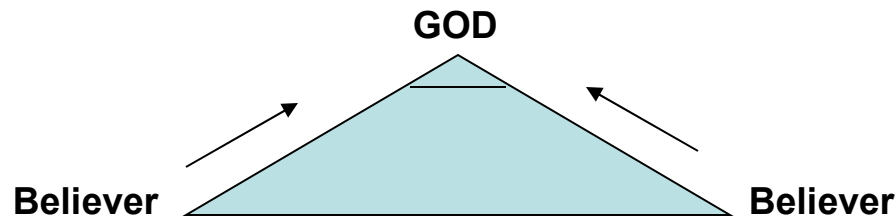
- Develops penetrating pictures of who God is:
 - Light, life, truth, righteousness
- Uses antithetical parallelism (stark contrasts) to make his points
 - Light vs. darkness
 - Truth vs. falsehood
 - Love vs. hatred
 - Love of the world vs. love of the Father
 - Jesus Christ vs. antichrists
 - Children of God vs. children of the Devil
 - Righteousness vs. sin
 - The Spirit of God vs. the spirit of the Antichrist
 - Life vs. death

John's Message is That 'God is Light and in Him is No Darkness at All' (1:5)

- To be in fellowship with Him we must walk in light and not in darkness (1:6-7)
- To walk in the light we must first acknowledge our own sin (1:8, 10)
- As we walk in the light we must regularly confess our sins, allowing the blood of Christ to continually cleanse us (1:9)
- Christ will act as our defense attorney (advocate) before the Father (2:1-2)
- Proof of our "walk in the light" is that we will keep His commandments and replace any hatred we have toward our brother with love (2:3-11)
- In short, we must walk as He walked (2:6)

The Main Theme of 1 John is Fellowship With God

- κοινωνία – fellowship; the setting aside of private interests and desires and the joining in with another or others for common purposes
- As Christians, we are bound not only to God, but to each other



- When we walk in the light, we have fellowship with each other (1:7)
- The man who claims to walk in the light but hates his brother, is in reality walking in darkness; it is the man who loves his brother who is in the light (2:9–11)
- To have fellowship with God we must walk in the light – we cannot have that fellowship while walking in moral darkness

Because Their Sins Have Been Forgiven, Believers Can Enjoy Fellowship With God

- As a result we can know “Him who is from the beginning” and are strengthened to overcome the temptations of the evil one (2:12-14)
- But if we are honest with ourselves and with God, we must admit that we are not always in fellowship with Him
- However, in 1:9 God makes provision for us
 - *If we confess (to agree with; to say the same thing; to concede) our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*
 - Our sins were already judicially forgiven at the cross – 1:9 is concerned with temporal fellowship
 - Being in fellowship with God is conditional on our acknowledgement of our sin
 - Self-examination and the resulting confession of sin “clears the slate” with God – Let us be sure to keep short accounts!

The Basis of Fellowship is the Blood of Christ

- John desires to transmit the apostolic witness to his readers so that they too may share the same fellowship with Jesus Christ (1:3)
- This fellowship with the God of light is possible only through the blood of Christ, who cleanses the believer (1:7)
- The blood of Christ satisfies the Father's righteous requirements (2:2)
- Believers must walk in integrity and openness to what the light of God reveals, with a willingness to confess sins as they are exposed by that light
- Believers are saved, yet sinners still
 - The Christian should actively seek God's provision in avoiding and overcoming sin which He reveals
 - Yet complete sinlessness will not become a reality until we stand before Him (3:2)

Christians Face Very Real Barriers To Continued Fellowship With God

- Two major roadblocks hinder this walk:
 - John wrote to warn his readers of **the lure of the world and the lies of antichrist** (2:15-26)
- We can easily be deceived (four times John refers to false teachers as liars)
 - Those who claim to have fellowship with God (who is altogether light) yet walk in darkness (1:6)
 - Those who deny that Jesus is the Christ -- essentially denying His deity (2:22)
 - The man who says that he loves God yet hates his brother (4:20)
- The antidote to these roadblocks is abiding in the apostolic truths we “heard from the beginning” (2:24)
- Through faith, we can overcome the world (5:4)
- In this **we are encouraged by the promise of eternal life** (2:25) and the
- Anointing of the **Holy Spirit, which authenticates these truths** to us (2:26-27)

Our Righteous Behavior Shows That We Are In Fellowship With Him

- Abiding in Christ (and thereby practicing righteousness) produces confidence, the result being, that we will have no reason to be ashamed when he comes again (2:28)
- This is the evidence that we are indeed saved (2:29)
- As Children of God, we look forward to the hope of His appearing when we will be like Him because we will see Him as He actually is (3:1-3)
 - He is fully righteous and we will be “like” Him in righteousness – this is a process that can begin right now!
- Regeneration is manifested in our practice of righteousness (2:29-3:10 and this righteousness is manifested in love (3:10-23)

John's Message Is Also That We Should Love One Another (3:11ff)

- **Negative example of Cain (3:12)**
 - The world will hate you when you manifest righteousness –don't be surprised! (3:13)
 - Our love for the brethren demonstrates we have passed from life to death; if we do not love, we remain in death (we can abide either in Christ, or our sinful state (3:14)
 - If you hate your brother, you are a murderer (like Cain) and the eternal life you have been promised does not characterize your life (3:15)
 - If we do not address the material needs of our brothers, one could question whether God's love is in us (3:17)
- **Positive example of Jesus Christ (3:16)**
 - *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.(3:16)*
- **Results of loving one another (3:18-19)**
 - By loving in action and in truth, our hearts will be at rest before our God, who surpasses us and knows everything (3:18-20)
 - If we obey Him and do what pleases Him, He will answer our prayers (3:22)
- **Reminder of what God commands of us (3:23-24)**
 - To believe in Jesus Christ (resulting in salvation)
 - To love one another as He commanded (how we are to live the Christian life)
 - Those who keep His commandments abide in Him and He in them – His Spirit assures us of this

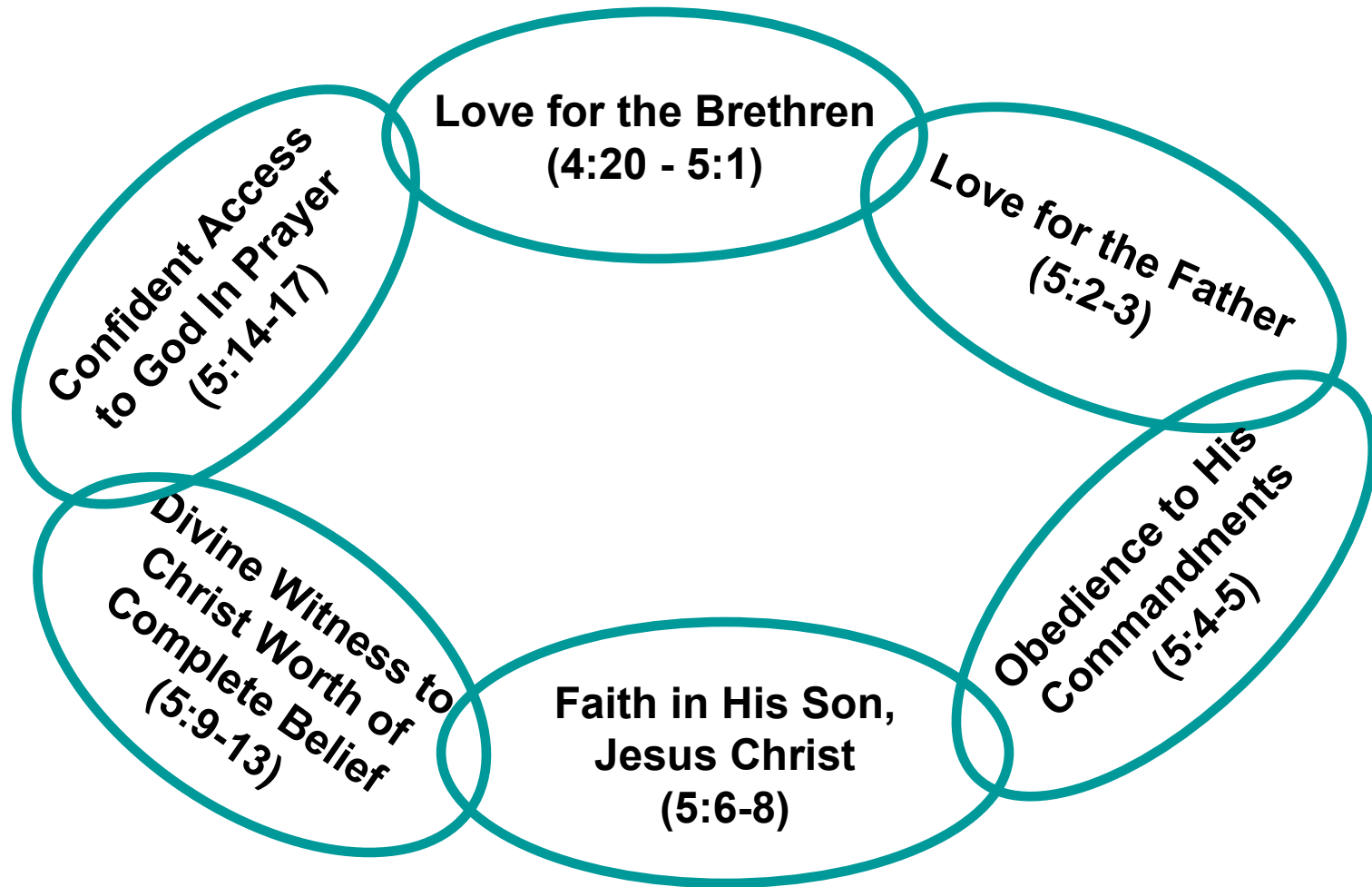
We Are To Test The Spirits (4:1-6)

- The Spirit of God confesses the incarnate Christ and confirms apostolic doctrine
 - *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. (5:1)*
- The test – every spirit that recognizes that Christ came in the flesh (God incarnate) is from God and every spirit which denies this truth is not from God; indeed, this is the spirit of the antichrist (4:2-3)
- We can overcome the spirit of the antichrist / the world through God who is more powerful
- We can discern the spirit of truth from that of error based on whether they hear the message which is from God (4:4-6)
 - Because the spirit of antichrist has the viewpoint of the world, the world listens
 - Whoever knows God listens to us
 - Whoever does not know God does not listen to us

God is Love (4:8, 16)

- ***This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (4:10)***
 - If you know God and are born of Him, you will love (4:8-9)
 - Let us love one another (4:7)
- The mutual abiding of the believer in God and God in the believer is manifested in love for others, and this love produces a divine and human fellowship that testifies to and reflects the reality of the Incarnation (4: 7-16)
- This mutual abiding also anticipates the perfect fellowship to come and creates a readiness to face the One from whom all love is derived (4:17-19)
 - Fear is incompatible with love (4:18)
 - *We love because He first loved us (4:19)*
 - *If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. (4:20)*

John Joins the Concepts He Has Presented Into a Circular Chain of Six Links



We Can Have Freedom From Habitual Sin

- Sin is a threat to fellowship and should be regarded as foreign to the believer's position in Christ (cf. Romans 6) (5:16-18)
 - We should pray for brothers who fall into sin
 - WARNING – it is possible to sin so egregiously that the Lord will take us home
- The believer stands with God against the Satanic world system (5:19)
- The incarnation produces true knowledge and communication with Christ; since he is the “true God and eternal life” the one who knows Him should avoid the lure of any substitute (5:20-21)

Conclusion: 1 John Offers an Indispensable Guide to Living the Christian Life

- **John offers His readers a fellowship barometer for daily Christian living**
 - Have I confessed all known sins to God? (1:9)
 - Am I walking in obedience to the light of God's Word? (2:4-5)
 - Am I demonstrating a love for the brethren? (2:9-10)

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