

1 John 1 – Fellowship with God

Most people understand that the important things in life are not things at all – they are the relationships we have. God has put a desire for relationship in every one of us, a desire He intended to be met with relationships with other people, but most of all, to be met by a relationship with Him. In this remarkable letter, John tells us the truth about relationships – and shows us how to have relationships that are real, for both now and eternity.

This Book was written by the Apostle John. It was written between A.D. 85 and 95, placing it in the late first century. This dating is supported by internal evidence, such as the author writing to a "second-generation" of believers, and external historical context regarding the rise of early Gnostic teachings and John's ministry in Ephesus after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Read 1 John 1

Vs 1 What does John mean by "that which was from the beginning"? The beginning John wrote of is not the beginning of this world; nor is it the beginning of creation. It is the beginning of Genesis 1:1 (in Hebrew, meaning *the first, in place, time, order or rank (specifically, a firstfruit), principal thing*) and John 1:1, the beginning (in Greek, meaning *chief in various applications of order, time, place, or rank, at the first*) there was before there was anything, when all there existed was God. The beginning of Genesis 1:1 is simple: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The beginning of John 1:1 is profound: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John takes us back to this time in eternity past, to meet this One which was from the beginning. This One is God (Elohim (*the self-existent One*) in Hebrew, Theos (*supreme deity*) in Greek) because the subject existed before all else and was the source and basis of the existence of all things. What 4 senses does John use to prove he had first-hand testimony of his time with Jesus? He heard, he saw with his eyes, he looked upon (*to look closely at, to perceive*) and handled. What titles does he give Jesus? The Word of life. John 1:4, 14

Vs 2 What is this verse telling us? The life (the Word that came to life; Jesus) was manifested (*to make visible or known what has been hidden or unknown*). "We", meaning more than just John, actually saw and can act as a credible witness to this fact. Because of what they witnessed, they can declare (*announce*) that eternal life that was with God the Father was visible to them. John is stating Jesus Himself is eternal, and therefore God. Jesus with the Father refers to the relationship between the Father and the Son, which is eternal. See John 17:24. This eternal relationship is clearly described in the Scriptures, but we could also understand it from simple logic. If God is love (1 John 4:8) and God is eternal (Micah 5:2), we understand that love in isolation is meaningless. Love needs an object, and since there was a time before anything was created, there was a time when the only love in the universe was between the members of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Vs 3 What is the point of this verse? Fellowship (*association, community, communion, participation, a sharing, a common bond and common life. It speaks of a living, breathing, sharing, loving relationship with another person*)! The purpose of John's declaration about this eternally existent, physically present, Word of life Who is God, yet is a person distinct from the Father (Jesus), is to bring his readers into fellowship with both God's people and God Himself. This simple and bold statement means that one can have a relationship with God. This idea would surprise many of John's readers, and it should be astounding to us. The Greek mind-set highly prized the idea of fellowship, but restricted to men among men – the idea of such an intimate relationship with God was revolutionary. Some people turn from this relationship with God because they feel so distant from Him. They want a relationship with God, but feel disqualified. They need to know what God has done to make this kind of relationship possible. The kind of relationship John described is only possible because Jesus is Who John says He is in the previous two verses. If someone invited you to have a "personal relationship" with Abraham Lincoln or Apostle Paul, you would think them foolish. One cannot have a genuine relationship with a dead man. But with the eternal God who became man, we can have a relationship. This is John's point. Notice John first considers fellowship with God's people, then with God. This is often how people come to experience a relationship with God: they first encounter God through relationships with God's people.

Vs 4 Why was John writing these things? That your joy (*cheerfulness*) may be full (*crammed, perfect supply*). The result of fellowship with Jesus is fullness of joy. This joy is an abiding sense of optimism and cheerfulness based on God, as opposed to happiness, which is a sense of optimism and cheerfulness based on circumstances. John 15:11, 16:24, 17:13.

NOTE: In the original text, these 4 verses are all one sentence; The eternal God, who was before all things, was physically manifested, and John and others could testify to this as eyewitnesses, God is the Word of life, He is distinct from the person of God the Father, we may have fellowship with this God, we are often introduced into this fellowship with God by the fellowship of God's people, this eternally existent God, the Word of Life, who was physically present with the disciples and others (and present for fellowship), is God the Son, named Jesus Christ and fellowship with Jesus leads to a life lived in fullness of joy.

Vs 5 John gives us another truth about Jesus. What is it? That He is pure light and when there is pure light, there is no darkness. For there to be darkness, there must be an absence of light. John isn't making this up; these are not his own personal opinions or ideas about God. This is God's message about Himself (which we have heard from Him), which John now reveals to us (and declare to you). What John will tell us about God is what God has told us about Himself. We can't be confident in our own opinions or ideas about God unless they are genuinely founded on what God has said about Himself. 1 Tim 6:16

Vs 6 Based on verse 5, what can we conclude? You can't walk in darkness and have fellowship with God. If you think you can, you are not being truthful/honest. John speaks of a walk in darkness, indicating a pattern of living. This does not speak of an occasional lapse, but of a lifestyle of darkness or a lifestyle of knowing disobedience. James 4:17

Vs 7 By contrast, if our pattern of living mirrors how we know God wants us to live, what two things will result? We have fellowship with other Christians who are also walking rightly AND the blood of Jesus cleanses (*to free from guilt of sin*) us from ALL sin. You might have expected John to say, "We have fellowship with God." That is true, but already in the idea of walking together with God in the light. John wants to make it clear that fellow Christians who walk in the light enjoy fellowship with each other. This leads to an important concept: if we do not have fellowship with one another, then one party or both parties are not walking in the light. Two Christians who are in right relationship with God will also naturally be in right relationship with each other. As we walk in the light we also enjoy the continual cleansing of Jesus. This is another indication that John does not mean sinless perfection by the phrase "walk in the light", otherwise, there would be no sin to cleanse in this ongoing sense. Did the one-time shedding of Jesus already pay for all our sin (past, present and future)? Yes! This cleansing that happens when you are walking rightly with God means cleansing of your conscience. The sin is paid for, but when you are knowingly sinning, you feel condemned. When you repent, the blood of Jesus cleanses your conscience so you no longer feel the guilt of your sin. 1 Cor 6:11

Vs 8 Is it honest to say we never sin as a Christian? Remember sin is missing the mark, or your knowledge of what God expects of you. No! It's not that we HAVE to sin. What John is saying is we can't brag we have it all together and walk continually in Christ-like perfection. If we are humble, we will know we need to continually examine ourselves and repent when we realize we've missed the mark. Notice we are deceiving our own selves if we say we never sin. If we say we never sin, we sin right here because we are lying!! To think we never sin is to deceive ourselves, and to say this of ourselves is to lie – the truth is not in us.

Vs 9 What glorious truth is available to us when we acknowledge our sin by confession? The blood of Jesus is right there to cleanse us! And how clean are we as a result? Completely! ALL unrighteousness is washed away. Prov 28:13, Rom 3:24-26

Vs 10 John repeats verse 8 here for emphasis. What else is he saying? If we say we never sin, when God says all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God (Rom 3:23), we are calling God a liar AND that His word (Jesus, the truth) is not in us. 1 John 5:10