

**A LOOK AT THE BOOK
1 JOHN
CAN TWO WALK TOGETHER UNLESS THEY BE AGREED?**

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Are you really enjoying life?

Or, are you frustrated and discouraged?

Could it be that the reason we aren't really enjoying life, is because we're not walking in close fellowship with God?

John writes to a church full of discouraged people to help us discover how to really enjoy life to the fullest!

AUTHOR AND DATE

The book itself does not tell who wrote it but it does speak of him as an eyewitness to the life of Christ in such a way as to leave the strong impression that he was an apostle.

Tradition identifies that apostle as John.

The author's style, vocabulary, and theology confirm that testimony.

As with other Johanine writings, this work is usually dated late, after the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), but before the persecution of Domitian (A.D. 95).

A date around A.D. 90 is normally assigned.

BACKGROUND

John has observed many *professing* believers who *claim* to know God but whose lives don't give evidence of what they profess.

He apparently believes most are truly saved but separated from fellowship with God.

Not living holy lives
Imitating the world and its patterns
Criticizing and attacking one another

They will never experience the true joy that comes from fellowship with God while they continue in this pattern.

Since their lives are not consistent with a Christian lifestyle, John apparently suspects that some may not have eternal life

They may have never trusted Christ

Therefore, he concludes by mentioning life as a prerequisite for fellowship

*Only those who have trusted Christ have eternal life!
Only they can enjoy true fellowship with God!*

PURPOSE AND THEME

John's four purposes:

1. That we might enjoy true fellowship 1:3
 - with other Christians
 - with God Himself
2. That we might have complete JOY 1:4
3. That we might not sin 2:1
4. That we might know that we have eternal life 5:13

John's message:

Amos 3:3 *"Can two walk together unless they be agreed?"*

If two people are going to go somewhere together they must be heading the same direction!

To have fellowship with one another, people must be going the same way!

To enjoy fellowship with God, we must be like Him!

ORGANIZATION

John's organizing principle is revealed in the introduction 1:1-4

1:1-2 He is about to *testify* to what he himself has seen and heard => 3 X

This isn't just a theoretical book

He is talking about his own experience – personal experience is the basis of the book

The things he is about to share he has seen

He introduces each section with *"This is the message . . . [or, this is the testimony. . .]"*

Each section tells us something about God that he has learned from his experience.

Each section tells us *something about God*, that we ought to **BE LIKE!**

What does John say God is like?

1:5 "This is the message . . ." GOD IS LIGHT

1:5-7 God is holy--those who would enjoy fellowship with God must be holy also (1:5-3:9)

Compare Leviticus 11:45; 1 Peter 1:15

God is HOLY => to enjoy fellowship with God, WE must be HOLY

(Transition: 3:10)

3:11 "This is the message . . ." => 4:8 GOD IS LOVE

God is LOVE => to enjoy fellowship with God, WE must LOVE EACH OTHER

(Transition: 4:13-5:10)

Lengthy transition unites our love for one another to the possession of eternal life.

5:11 "And this is the testimony . . ." => 5:20 GOD (JESUS) IS LIFE

Those who would enjoy fellowship with Him must possess eternal life (5:11-21)

God is LIFE => to enjoy fellowship with God, WE must have LIFE

We will only be able to accomplish this and to enjoy fellowship with one another and with God, when we *ABIDE IN HIM* (that is, when we find *IN HIM* what we need to sustain our life.

[*ABIDE* => John 15:4-5; 2:6, 10, 14, 24, 27, 28; 3:6, 24]

ARGUMENT

INTRODUCTION 1:1-4

BASIS OF THE MESSAGE 1:1-2

John introduces his message by stating that this is not a theoretical message, but rather, a message based on his own experience.

The things he is about to share he has seen with his own eyes and experienced in his own body.

Therefore he is sure of their truth.

He can be certain of his message because he has personally known the One Who is eternal life.

PURPOSE OF THE MESSAGE 1:3-4

What John has learned by following Christ he wants to communicate to us also.

His purpose is that we might have fellowship with one another, and ultimately, with God Himself.

When this has been accomplished, we will together experience full joy.

In agreement with this purpose that we might have fellowship and with God, John explains the three prerequisites to fellowship.

In essence, his message is that in order to enjoy fellowship, we must be headed in the same direction.

Thus he presents three characteristics of God which must also be present in people who wish to have fellowship with Him.

GOD'S HOLINESS 1:5-3:10

The first characteristic of God is holiness.

DESCRIPTION OF GOD 1:5

God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

IMPLICATIONS FOR BELIEVERS 1:6-3:10

The implications of this characteristic of God for those who want to enjoy fellowship with Him are profound.

Need to walk in holiness 1:6-7

In brief, John says that to have fellowship with a holy God, we too must be holy.

Provision for restoration 1:8-2:2

To keep this message in its proper perspective, John relates this concept to man's sinful condition.

There must be a provision for the restoration of sinful people.

All people sin, even children of God (present tense) 1:8

When we're sinning we can't enjoy fellowship with God at the same time (1:6)

Nevertheless, the reality that we all live with is that all sin.

To think otherwise is to deceive ourselves (1:8).

God has provided a means of restoration through Christ (1:9).

When we do sin, if we will confess our sin, God will cleanse us and restore us to fellowship with Him.

All people have sinned (1:10).

God has made this provision because we all have come to Him as sinners.

To claim that we haven't sinned is to make God a liar.

You would think that would block everyone from fellowship with God!

God's purpose for us is that we not sin at all (2:1a)

Having dealt with the reality of our sinfulness, John doesn't want us to use that as an excuse to continue to sin.

His purpose is to motivate us not to sin.

God's provision for His people when we do sin is a defense attorney—the same One Who died for us (2:1b-2).

In the light of our reality, he assures us that God has provided a defender, the same One who offered Himself as a sacrifice to atone for sin.

One whale of an enigma!

1:5-3:10 **GOD IS HOLY!**

1:5-7 To enjoy fellowship with Him, I must be holy!

How can I ever make it?

1:8-10 I am a sinner

If I think I am not, I am only kidding myself! 1:8

I might as well agree with God about my condition, so He can cleanse me 1:9

I must live a holy life to enjoy fellowship with a holy God!

What, then, is the solution to dealing with sin, so that we can have fellowship with God?

- (1) Recognize my sinfulness 1:8-10
- (2) Call upon our defender 2:1
- (3) Abide in Him Compare John 15:4-5
2:6, 10, 14, 24, 27, 28; 3:6, 24

= Draw from Him what we need to sustain our life.

Demonstration of fellowship 2:3-27

Four ways we can know we're in fellowship with God.

Those who have trusted Christ and who enjoy fellowship with God will demonstrate it in our daily lives by:

Obedience to His commands 2:3-14

The most obvious evidence of fellowship with God will be obedience to His commands.

We will seek to be holy just as God is holy (2:3-11)

Obedience to His commands in general 2:3-6

Specifically, loving one another 2:7-11

He's confident he can appeal to us on the basis of our own experience because we've seen in distinct ways—at different maturity levels—how God has brought changes in our lives 2:12-14

Not loving the world 2:15-17

In addition to the general characteristic of holiness and obedience, two specific evidences will be seen in the lives of those who walk in fellowship with God.

First, we will not love the world system and the things it offers us.

Love for God and love for the world are opposed to one another.

They cannot exist together!

Rejecting false teachers 2:18-27

Secondly, those who are in fellowship with God will recognize false teachers and reject them.

The specific teaching which will guide in detection of such false teachers is the denial that Jesus is the Anointed One of God.

John is confident that his readers will continue to abide in the truth and thus demonstrate this characteristic of fellowship with God.

Exhortation to demonstrate God's holiness 2:28-3:10

John concludes this discussion of holiness with an exhortation that we apply this truth to our daily lives and demonstrate holiness.

We will live this way as long as we abide in Him.

The exhortation to live holy lives includes the statement that those who abide in Him do not sin 3:6-9

The confusion which has resulted from misunderstanding John's message demands closer attention.

John speaks to us as sons of God, yet he exhorts us to abide in Christ 2:27-28

Thus it is clear that abiding in Christ is not automatic among God's children.

His emphasis in the book is on fellowship with God, *NOT* salvation.

Abiding in Christ is part of the process leading to fellowship, not salvation.

John's use of tenses is careful and deliberate.

Throughout this section careful use is made of the present tense with indicative mood (statement of fact), to describe a continuing process.

Even more careful use is made of the substantive present participle which looks at a *characteristic* of the person described.

- * 2:3 "we know that we have known Him . . . if we are keeping [pres. cont.] His commands"
- * 2:4 "the person who characteristically goes around saying, 'I have known Him' and who is characterized by not keeping His commands is a liar, and the truth is not in Him."
- * 2:5 "Whoever is keeping [pres. cont.] His Word, God's love has been made complete in Him."
- * 2:6 "The person who characteristically goes around saying he abides in Him, had better be sure he walks like He did."
- * 2:9 "He who characteristically claims to be in the light, but who characteristically hates his brother, is really in the darkness."
 - 2:10 "He who characteristically loves his brother, is the one who is really in the light."
 - 2:11 "He who characteristically hates his brother is in the darkness."
 - 2:15 "If anyone is loving [pres. cont.] the world, the love of the Father isn't in him"
 - => While you are loving the world, you can't love God at the same time.
 - 2:17 "The person who characteristically does the will of God abides forever."
 - 2:29 "Everyone who characteristically does what is right has been born of Him."
 - 3:3 "Everyone who is characterized by holding on to this hope is purifying [pres. cont.] himself."
- ** 3:6 "No one who characteristically abides in Him keeps on sinning [pres. cont.].! Everyone who characteristically sins has not seen Him nor known Him."
- * 3:7 "The person who characteristically does right is righteous, just as He is righteous."
- * 3:8 "The person who characteristically commits sin belongs to the devil, because from the beginning the devil is committing sin [pres. cont.]."
- * 3:9 "Everyone who has been born of God does not keep on continuously practicing sin [pres. cont.], because God's seed is remaining [pres. cont.] in him and he is not able to keep on sinning [pres. cont.]."
- * 3:10 "Everyone whose lifestyle is not doing right and not loving his brother, is not of God."

John argues consistently that:

People who are *characterized by* righteousness have been born of God.

People who are *characterized by* sinful deeds have *not* been born of God.

In the broader context of the book, John states clearly that *ALL people sin*, even children of God 1:8

He is clear that *when we are sinning*, we can't enjoy fellowship with God 1:6

But God has provided a means of restoration through Christ 1:9

Nevertheless,

people who are *characterized by* sin have *never* known Christ 3:6, 8

people who have known Christ, will not be *characterized by* sinful lifestyles 3:7

Similarly, it is *impossible to continue to practice sin*, and to *continue in fellowship with God* at the same time. 2:3-6, 9, 15

PRACTICAL TEST BASED ON 1 JOHN

S = saved	F = In fellowship
N = not saved	O = Out of fellowship
? = can't tell	D = Deceiving self

- | | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| A person who characteristically commits sin | _____ | _____ |
| A person who characteristically does not sin | _____ | _____ |
| A person who characteristically commits sin,
but sometimes does not sin | _____ | _____ |
| A person who characteristically does not sin,
but is presently practicing sin | _____ | _____ |
| A person who characteristically does not sin,
but sometimes sins | _____ | _____ |
| A person who is presently sinning | _____ | _____ |
| A person who <i>never</i> sins | _____ | _____ |
| A person who characteristically loves others | _____ | _____ |
| A person who characteristically
doesn't love others | _____ | _____ |
| A person who characteristically doesn't love others,
but sometimes shows love to others | _____ | _____ |
| A person who characteristically loves others,
but is presently angry and not showing love | _____ | _____ |
| A person who characteristically loves others
but sometimes gets angry and doesn't love | _____ | _____ |
| A person who is presently not showing love
to others | _____ | _____ |
| A person who <i>never</i> gets angry
and never fails to love others | _____ | _____ |
| A person who has spiritual life | _____ | _____ |
| A person who doesn't have spiritual life | _____ | _____ |

How should an awareness of this concept affect our lives today?

GOD'S LOVE 3:11-5:10

SUMMARY 3:11

By means of a brief transition (3:10), John passes from holiness as a basis for fellowship to the second characteristic required for us to enjoy fellowship with God: *LOVE*

Since God is love, those who wish to enjoy fellowship with Him must also love one another.

CONTRAST BETWEEN THE WORLD AND THE CHRISTIAN 3:12-4:6

John demonstrates the contrast between the world and the children of God.

Hatred from the world 3:12-13

It should not surprise us that the world does not love God's children. 11-13

They oppose God; they will likewise oppose us.

Cain's example 3:12

The world's hatred 3:13

Love among brethren 3:14-24

In contrast, one of the clearest evidences that we walk with God is love for God's children 3:14-24

Just as Christ loved us and demonstrated it by His death, we should love one another and demonstrate it by our actions (3:14-18).

Evidence of our salvation 14-15

Example of Christ 16

Demonstration by deeds 17-18

Results of demonstration 19-24

The results of such demonstrations of love include:

Certainty of salvation 19-20

Effective prayer 21-23

Fellowship with God 24

Teaching of the world 4:1-6

An additional aspect of the contrast between the world and the church is seen in the response to truth.

In this parenthetical observation, John points out that the evidence of spirits can deceive people.

If the spirit acknowledges Jesus as God's anointed one who has come in the flesh, it is from God.

If it does not acknowledge Christ's divine origin, it is not from God, no matter how convincing it may appear. 1-3

Although God's message is superior to the world's (4), those who belong to the world will never receive it (5-6).

They are not interested in hearing the truth.

God's people will seek the truth.

They will recognize it when they hear it and receive it gladly.

Its message 1-3

Our superiority 4

Predetermined responses 5-6

EXHORTATION TO LOVE 4:7-11

John now returns to the basic exhortation to love one another.

Since God has loved us, we ought to love one another.

People characterized by love for God's children are God's children.

People characterized by refusing to love God's children are not God's children.

Exhortation 4:7a

Cause 4:7b-8

Example 4:9-10

Implication 4:11

RESULTS OF LOVE 4:12-18

John begins a prolonged transition which slowly moves the reader from love as a characteristic of those who walk in fellowship with God, to life, the final characteristic (4:12-5:10).

He begins this transition by describing the results of demonstrating love for the brethren (12-18).

Revelation of God's nature 4:12-16

By means of our love for the brethren, people who walk in fellowship with God reveal God's nature to others.

Though no one has ever seen God, our deeds of love for others demonstrate that He is in us.

It makes our spoken testimony concerning God credible to those who observe our lives.

Confidence before God 4:17-18

In addition to the revelation to others, the presence of love also testifies to us.

It gives us confidence before God.

REASONS FOR LOVE 4:19-5:2a

These *results* of love could also be considered *reasons* we ought to love.

John adds some additional reasons to love:

God's love 4:19-20

We love Him because He first loved us.

This same love is demonstrated in our love for others also.

God's command 4:21

Another reason we should love one another is that God has commanded it.

God's concern 5:1-2a

The final, and perhaps most significant, reason for loving one another is that our brother is the child of the One we love.

COMPANIONS OF LOVE 5:2b-10

John concludes this discussion concerning love by describing two things which accompany love.

Obedience to God's commands 2b-3a

John has been observing the close relationship between love and obedience to God's commands.

Thus his concluding statement is logical: when we love one another, we obey God's commands.

Victory over the world 3b-10

Another logical companion of the love God produces in those who walk in fellowship with Him is victory over the world.

The one who loves is the one who obeys.

The one who obeys is the one who has overcome and won victory over the world.

Who is able to overcome?

He who overcomes the world is the one who has believed in Jesus.

The one who has believed in Jesus is the one who has received the testimony which God has given concerning His Son.

The testimony demonstrates that He is the source of eternal life.

He who has the Son has eternal life.

The logical development just traced leads into John's final point:

To have fellowship with God, one must first have life (5:11-20).

It seems strange that John would leave such an important point until the end of the book!

Apparently John has assumed that His readers have already trusted Christ, and thus have fulfilled this prerequisite.

In conclusion, however, he wants to be sure.

Thus he speaks briefly, but clearly, to the issue.

No one can fulfill the first two prerequisites, holiness and love, unless he is in the Son, the source of eternal life.

He urges us to be sure we are in Him.

GOD'S LIFE 5:11-20

The transition into the last section is much longer than the previous one 4:12-5:10

He slowly moves the reader from love, as a characteristic of those who walk with God, to life, the final characteristic of God

John's final point is that to have fellowship with God, we must first have life.

That life comes through God's own Son, the Source of life **5:11, 5:21**

No one can fulfill the first two prerequisites for fellowship with God, unless they are in the Son, the source of eternal life!

He urges us to be sure that *WE* are *IN HIM!*

In the conclusion of this section, John notes that Jesus is the true God, and He is eternal life.

Thus the final characteristic of God is that God is life.

Those who would enjoy fellowship with God must abide in Him.

Through Him we receive eternal life.

SOURCE OF LIFE 5:11

Christ is the source of life.

WAY TO LIFE 12-13

Through trust in Christ, we can know that we have eternal life.

ASSURANCE WHICH ACCOMPANIES LIFE 14-17

When we trust Him, we have the confidence to ask Him for the things we need and to know that He will give them to us (14-15).

In no area is this more true than in intercession for others (15-17).

When we pray for the restoration of others, God will answer our request.

However, if the offense is likely to harm the testimony of God's work (1 Cor. 11:27-34; Acts 5:1-11), He may have to judge the individual with physical death for His name's sake.

In that case, even the intercession of the faithful brother will not avail.

VICTORY WHICH ACCOMPANIES LIFE 18-20

John focuses clearly on the result of Christ's life-giving work as he concludes.

God protects those who have eternal life from falling into continuous sin.

We have been freed from the power of the evil one who controls the world.

We can know God and enjoy fellowship with Him, if we abide in Christ, the One who is God Himself and eternal life.

CONCLUDING WARNING AGAINST IDOLATRY 5:21

The book concludes with a special warning about a significant contemporary danger.

They are to stay away from idols.

HOLINESS + LOVE + LIFE = TRUE JOY