

King James Bible Study Correspondence Course

An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

1 John Lesson 2

1 John 1:1-4

return pages 6 & 7 only

The Source of Fellowship

Fellowship with other Christians flows out of fellowship with GOD

What do you think of when you hear that a fellowship time has been planned for your church? In many churches, "fellowship" is used to describe social times, often accented with all sorts of delicious foods.

Certainly, social times like that are an important part of healthy church life. God made us social beings that need contact with other people. However, we need to balance two dimensions: our duty as we serve God and our delight in relationships with other people.

Using "fellowship" only to describe social gatherings falls far short of what the New Testament means by the term. As John began his first letter, he came quickly to the subject of fellowship. For John, "fellowship" speaks of a positive, vibrant relationship. It is enjoying a relationship with someone with whom we hold much in common.

Fellowship is more than just getting along with others. Instead, it is having a heart-bond that is built on truth and warmed by love. Fellowship begins with a good relationship with God, and then that flows out into good relationships with others.

We do not cultivate true fellowship by planning more elaborate parties. Rather, fellowship within a church grows as each individual Christian learns to fellowship with the Lord.

Starting at the Very Beginning

A good doctor understands that symptoms have underlying causes. Treating the symptoms may provide temporary relief, but the only way to have permanent healing is to eradicate the disease that produces the symptoms.

John's first epistle, or letter, was written to a group of Christians who were confronting the threat of false teaching. As John sought to help them, he began at the foundation of the Christian faith. By rebuilding their confidence in Christ and in the gospel, John reinforced the basis of their spiritual lives. The false teachers had introduced new and erroneous doctrines. John countered them by reminding his readers of "the story of Jesus and His love."

John started his letter with a complicated but powerful sentence that continues through the first three verses. This statement sets forth the reliable message that John was communicating to them.

The false teachers had invented their message, but John was proclaiming "that which was from the beginning (v. 1). As one of Jesus' first

King James Bible Study Correspondence Course

An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

disciples, John had witnessed from the start the ministry of the Lord and the gospel that He brought. In this context, "the beginning" does not refer to the absolute beginning of the universe, as it does in John 1:1, but rather to the beginning of the gospel message that Christ brought when He came to earth.

As a disciple of Jesus, John observed Him closely for the three years of His earthly ministry. While Jesus went about Israel teaching, preaching and performing miracles, John heard what He said and saw what He did. John was an eyewitness to the evidence that proved that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. John watched Jesus as He died on the cross, and he gazed into the empty tomb and recognized that Jesus had indeed been raised from the dead.

After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples, and He invited doubting Thomas to touch His wounds (John 20:26-29). From all of this evidence, John knew with certainty Who Jesus was. He was not just a good man. Neither was He a divine being Who only seemed to be human. John was convinced that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, Who came to earth as a human to die on the cross in the place of all people. This is the gospel, the good news that John declared throughout his long ministry as an apostle. This is the gospel that he reaffirmed to his readers in the epistle of 1 John.



Scripture Memorization

1 Jn 1:3

3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

John wrote about what he knew from personal observation. Fellowship builds upon the foundation of truth. Fellowship is the bond for fellowship with others Christians.

In his Gospel, John used "the Word" as a title for Jesus Christ. In 1 John "the Word of life" does not appear to refer to Christ, but to the gospel that Christ brought and that the apostle declared. In verse 2, John went on to describe in more detail what the gospel is and what it provides.

Where we start in our beliefs determines where we end up in our behavior. The false teachers were wrong in their understanding of Christ, and that error in turn produced disastrous consequences in the lives of those who followed them. John went back to the very beginning to restate the foundational truths of the gospel. Only by treating the underlying spiritual disease could John take care of the ungodly symptoms that were appearing in the lives of Christians.

King James Bible Study Correspondence Course

An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

Knowing for Certain

After John mentioned the gospel of Christ, "the Word of life," he could not resist the impulse to add a few statements about it. Verse 2, therefore, is a parenthesis. In verse 3 John resumed the sentence he had begun in the first verse, but before then he wanted to mention some important truths about the gospel message.

Two times in verse 2 John used the word "manifested" to refer to how he came to know the gospel of Christ. The false teachers invented their doctrines, but John had received the truth from God. God Himself had made it known to him through Christ; consequently, the gospel is indeed a reliable message.

The false teachers claimed to be authorities as they proclaimed their error. John, however, had a twofold authority that they could not claim. First, he had personally seen Christ, so he had the authority of an eye-witness, one who could stand as a witness in a court of law.

Second, Christ commissioned John and the other disciples as HIS apostles. He sent them into the world, charging them to preach the gospel to every person. As John taught, he spoke as an authorized representative of the Son of God.

The message that John declared is the good news of eternal life. We usually think of eternal life in the sense of its duration into the future without end. There is, however, another sense of eternal life that Scripture teaches. Eternal life is a new divine quality of life that belongs to the Christian today and then continues into the everlasting future. Eternal life is not just a blessed promise for the future; it is a delightful possession right now.

John, then, renewed his readers' confidence in the gospel message. This truth was revealed by GOD to John and the other disciples. As reliable eyewitnesses and authorized apostles, they declared the truth about eternal life through Christ. This is certain truth that provides a stable foundation for life.

The Tie That Binds

After his parenthesis of verse 2, John in verse 3 finished the statement that he had begun in the first verse. He summarized what he had already said in the words "that which we have seen and heard," and then he went on to say that he declared what he himself had witnessed. John did not keep the good news of Christ and His gospel to himself. He knew that good news is for sharing not for keeping. He wanted his readers to know the great truth that he had come to know.

However, John wanted to do more than just inform his readers of the truth. He loved them, and he recognized that only common commitment to the gospel truth could produce genuine fellowship.

King James Bible Study Correspondence Course

An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

At a human level, this could refer to an athletic team, a committee, or a club. In those cases the common cause lies on the surface of life. When the New Testament speaks of fellowship, it means a much deeper intersection of lives. Ideally, fellowship is the bond in which individual Christians are joined together with God and with one another. We are saved as individuals, but then God blesses us with intimate fellowship with Himself and with other Christians. That is certainly much more significant than just eating together at a church potluck dinner!

Christian fellowship has two interrelated dimensions. The gospel message is that Jesus Christ died for sinners so that He might bring them to God.

Through salvation we enter into a family relationship with God. Therefore, each Christian is related to God the Father, but the blessing goes beyond that. In God's family, Christians are related to one another as brothers and sisters. Throughout this letter, John examined how Christians should behave toward others in their spiritual family.

Because fellowship with others depends upon fellowship with God, it is crucial that the truth of the gospel not be undermined. The false teaching about Christ prevented those who held such a view from having their sins transferred to Christ. Fellowship with God, therefore, was impossible.

Only a shared relationship with Christ can produce genuine fellowship among Christians. Fellowship cannot be forced by human organizational schemes, but it must be the fruit of living within the family of God. Unity apart from genuine commitment to Christ is only an appearance of fellowship; it is not the real thing.

Finding True Joy

It is obvious in this letter that John had a deep concern and affection for his readers. Several times he referred to them as his little children. Just as parents want their children to be happy, so John wanted his spiritual children to have their lives full of joy. As they came to enjoy the blessings of fellowship with God and with each other, he would observe them and would find great joy.

As John taught about Christian fellowship, he showed that sharing together in Christ means that when one rejoices, all rejoice. When their joy was full, John's joy was full as well.

Because the Christian faith addresses the ultimate questions of life and death, salvation and judgment, it requires serious attention. John certainly had some stern words for false teachers. At the same time, however, the seriousness of our belief should not suppress the celebration of our joy. In fellowshiping with God and with His people, we need to rejoice in God's

King James Bible Study Correspondence Course

An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

goodness. Our worship should not become a joyless duty, but rather a delighted joy.

In a world that is shackled by fear, our faith in God should give us joy. In a world that is plagued by guilt, our forgiveness by God should cause us to rejoice. In a world that is alarmed by uncertainty, our hope in God's promises should give us peace. In a world that is torn by competition and injustice, our fellowship in God's family should keep us singing.

Certainly Christians should be marked by faith, hope, and love, but they should also display true joy. God's gospel truth is the foundation for our fellowship with Him and with one another. That fellowship is an unending fountain of joy for our lives. That joy should be a powerful testimony to the world around us.

Life Applications

- It is easy for us to become paralyzed by doubt. When doubts arise in our spiritual lives, they undermine our confidence in God, His promises, and our salvation. John wrote to reassure Christians that they can know the truth. He himself was a reliable eyewitness of Christ. When doubts start to assail us, 1 John is a great resource to fortify our faith.
- We often form friendships on the basis of shared interests. If those interests stay on the surface of our lives, then our friendships will remain at the superficial level. Christians share the deepest potential for genuine fellowship. When we are brothers and sisters in God's family, we have a tie that truly binds us at the soul. We need to cultivate the fellowship that Christ has provided for us.
- Christians of all people should be joyful. The blessings that we have in Christ far surpass any challenges that we can face. Sometimes we get so preoccupied with pressures, problems, and needs that we fail to remember all of the ways that God has enriched our lives. This week take some time to count your blessings. As you do that, God's joy will renew your soul.

notes

KJV

King James Bible Study Correspondence Course

An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

1 John Lesson 2

1 John 1:1-4

Name _____

1. According to John 1:12, what happens to those who receive Christ?
2. How would an inability to fellowship with God affect Christian fellowship?
3. What is fellowship?
4. What is the key verse of this lesson?
5. What can we learn from John's zeal to tell others about the Gospel of CHRIST?
6. What is the most essential part of true fellowship?
7. What is the Gospel of CHRIST?
8. True worship should be _____.
9. Explain eternal life.
10. What are the three things the world has to deal with daily?
 - a.

King James Bible Study Correspondence Course

An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

b.

c.

11. Christian fellowship has two interrelated dimensions, what are they?

12. Explain how to go beyond a superficial level in true fellowship?

13. What are the ultimate questions the Christian faith addresses?

14. Why should Christians be a joyful people?

15. Why is it important to go to Church?

16. What was the purpose of this lesson?



Scripture memorization

Write out these verses on the back on this page

1 Cor 15:3-4; Gal 6:2; Heb 10:25; 1Thes 5:11; Heb 3:13