

# FELLOWSHIP: 1 JOHN 1

## About the Author:

- It's not stated, but both external & internal evidence points to John the apostle.
- External evidence includes Polycarp and Papias (both pupils of John's) who quote from the epistle and attribute it to John.
- Internal evidence is found in the many similar styles/phrases between the Gospel of John and this epistle.

## Date

- We're not sure, but external evidence points to 90-95 A.D. shortly after the Gospel of John in Ephesus.

## Recipients

- It's not addressed to anyone, but it's clearly for Christians everywhere.

## Theme

- A group known as Gnostics were spreading false teachings. They claimed to have superior knowledge, and so their name in the Greek (ginosko) was transliterated "to know". This is very fitting because the term "know" is used 37 times in the ESV (only second to "love" which is used 46 times). According to them the Gospel was good but they had a better way. Plummer states they believed all matter was evil and so two conclusions were made: the body must be continually disciplined OR since the body is evil one can let it do whatever it wants since it cannot affect the soul. The belief also rejected that Jesus came in the flesh. Either He wasn't human or that the Christ entered into Jesus and left before the cross. Either way it was a false teaching.
- John wrote so they may have eternal life and not be carried away by false spirits. John is a great reminder of what it means to abide in God, walk in the light, know God, love God, practice righteousness, and love the brethren.

1-2 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us -

- **John 1:1-2** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."

- **John 1:14** "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."
- **John 20:27-29** "The He said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.' Thomas answered Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'"
- The letter implies brethren were being troubled by certain claims: Jesus was not God or did not come in the flesh. John seems to go out of his way to make the point: Jesus did exist. He was God. He was God in the flesh and many were witnesses to this truth.
- It's not that we don't live around those who deny Jesus. However, imagine being one of the few hand picked by Jesus. Imagine the love you'd have for Him and the personal offense at hearing He wasn't real or wasn't God.
- There's no secret - it's hard building a relationship with someone you can't see, but we'll not have any idea of John's "skin in the game" if we're not in His word and building a relationship through study & prayer.

**3-4** that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

- Our joy comes from having a relationship with God. And that's what's behind the term "fellowship." It's defined as a *"close association involving mutual interests and sharing, association, communion, fellowship, close relationship."* We are God's children. We are a brother to Christ, the Son. It is because of this common relationship that people are in fellowship with each other. It is, indeed, a close relationship. It seems that the older we get, we appreciate our relationships with others over any other treasure on earth. We should treasure our relationship with God over any other.
- Or *your* joy may be complete. **1 Peter 1:8** "Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,"

**5** This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

- **Genesis 1:1-3** "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and the darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."
- **John 1:3-5** "All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."
- **John 1:9-10** "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him."

- **John 8:12** "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"
- **James 1:16-18** "Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."
- The next five verses contain "if we" statements and are fundamental to a Christian's life.
- The next two verses shouldn't come as a shock to any Christian. What John states here has been stated before. **We do not serve a fake God.** We serve a living God. IF WE forget these truths. IF WE no longer appreciate the power behind them, THEN WE will fall into a trap. Pay attention to John's "IF WE" statements. Appreciate the repetitive nature and its purpose.

**6-7 If we** say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But **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 cleanses us from all sin.

- Ever known someone who has repeated a lie so many times that you wonder if they believe it? Ever been that person?
- We understand how darkness is being contrasted with light, but it's important to take note of:
  - "Walk" and "practice". This isn't talking about a person who sins from time to time. This is talking about a lifestyle. Habitual sin. It's a rebellious attitude towards God. Think about the picture of "walking" and "practice." When your first child took their first step, you didn't tell people, "They're walking!" You say, "he/she took their first step!" Jim and I played some tennis together. He's clearly had more practice than me - seeing as how I've never played. We discussed this passage on the court. If I took a racket and headed out and returned within 5 minutes and said, "Yeah, went to the court and gave it a good 5 swings! Practice makes perfect!" You'd not be in the wrong to tell me I didn't practice.
  - "IF" is really an important word in verse 7. This does not teach that every time you sin, when you're walking in the light, your sin is automatically forgiven. Forgiveness of sin is conditional to walking in the light.
    - However, for those who walk in the light - you need to have peace. We're not supposed to live in fear. You should know whether you're walking in the light or not. You should know, for example, whether your child loves you or not. Whether they're good or bad. This is a comforting passage.

**8-10 If we** say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we** confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **If we** say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

- Notice verse 8 & 10. No point in saying you "have no" sin or "have not" sinned. This covers the past and present. Don't know who you're trying to fool, but you don't fool

anyone and you especially don't fool God. God has already made it clear through several inspired writers that such a claim is false. So, if you're trying to pretend that's the case, you're lying to yourself. If you say so, you're making God a liar and His word is not in you. Again, he writes, "IF WE". We're all guilty.

- Notice - this doesn't say, "If we say we do not walk in sin, we deceive ourselves."
- This could very well be a problem with early Gnostic teaching. This would persuade a person that what they do in the body cannot effect a spiritual reality. So, we want to appreciate it's original purpose, but this principle still hits home with everyone.
- If we confess our sins we will be forgiven.
  - Some say we need to confess every sin before we die or else we'll be separated from God. We need to be very careful about this. God is faithful and dependable. Consider David's statement in [Psalm 19:12-13](#) *"Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me!"* This speaks of deliberate and ignorant sins. Sometimes we may not ever realized we've sinned. We need to trust in God's mercy and grace. Trust that He will give us time to realize any issues. Brethren, we're all going to die guilty of some sin. I promise you that.
  - God won't just forgive us. He's faithful and just to forgive us. When He does so, He does so in a faithful and just way. He will be faithful to His promises. He is just, because He sent the just and the justifier for us. He is acting in a just way when He forgives.
  - The question isn't "what do I do with that truth?" Rather, "what does that truth do to me?"