**On Fellowship in John’s Epistles**

*1 John 1; 2 & 3 John*

**Introduction**

1. Fellowship is a basic scriptural and spiritual principle which we must have an understanding of in order to be right with God. (Restored fellowship with God is the concept of salvation from sin.)
2. Throughout the history of the Lord’s church, from the 1st century until now, men and women have resisted the Divine guidelines and expectations concerning fellowship.
3. We must not resist God’s guidelines and expectations concerning fellowship.
4. A look at the 3 epistles of John helps with understanding principles and applications of fellowship.
5. A Foundation for Fellowship – **1 John 1:1-7**
6. The Need for Declaring the Word of Life **(vv. 1-4)**
   1. **(v. 1)** – Jesus – the Word of life – came into the world to bring life.
      1. John alludes to what he wrote about in his gospel.
      2. **Cf. John 1:1-5** – In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
         1. Life – spiritual.
         2. Life through light – spiritual enlightenment.
         3. **(v. 14)** – Knowledge of the glory of God – in the face of Christ. **(cf. 2 Corinthians 4:6) (cf. John 17:3 – to know God is eternal life, known through Jesus)**
         4. Always knowledge that acts on what is known – ***“all things that pertain to life and godliness thorough the knowledge of Him” (2 Peter 1:3 –*** *epignosis*).
      3. Connection – eternal life = fellowship with the Father.
      4. Jesus could offer such because of His intimate relationship with the Father – ***“I and My Father are one” (John 10:30).***
      5. Thus, Jesus is the only way to the Father (**cf. John 14:6**).
      6. We know Jesus through the declared gospel of the apostles 🡪
   2. **(v. 2)** – He was witnessed to be declared through His delegates – apostles.
   3. **(vv. 3-4)** – The apostles declared Him so that fellowship could be had with the Father, and with those who enjoyed such fellowship.
7. The Message Heard from Him **(vv. 5-7)**
   1. **(v. 5)** – Jesus revealed God in His life by the things He taught, and the way He lived.
      1. **God is light** – spiritual truth, and morality – purity, holiness.
      2. **No darkness at all** – negative description – cannot have fellowship with sin.
   2. **(vv. 6-7)** – The implications of such regarding our relationship with Him.
      1. NO FELLOWSHIP – walk in darkness.
      2. FELLOWSHIP – walk in light.
         1. Also – fellowship with those who have the same fellowship with God.
         2. Vertical fellowship with God makes the horizontal fellowship with man possible – in spiritual matters.
8. How does this translate into our lives in application – personally, and in our relationships one to another? 🡪
9. Applications of Fellowship – **2 & 3 John**
10. The Importance of Walking in Truth
    1. **2 John 3** – The blessings of God are afforded us in ***“truth and love.”***
       1. Loving God and walking in truth are intimately related – **1 John 2:3-6**
          1. **1 John 2:15** – when we love the world (opposite of truth) the love of God can’t possibly be in us. (i.e. our love for God)
       2. When we love God by walking in the truth He grants us grace, mercy, and peace.
       3. **(v. 4)** – God commands us to walk in truth – it matters what we believe, and do – this is cause for rejoicing 🡪
    2. **3 John 2-4** – When one walks in truth he prospers in spiritual health.
       1. Soundness of spirit is found in the truth.
       2. Life is given in the truth – thus, spiritual health is found in truth.
       3. WHEN ONE IS NOT WALKING ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH, THAT ONE IS UNHEALTHY!
          1. **(v. 11)** – therefore we shouldn’t imitate evil, or we won’t be of God.
          2. **(v. 12)** – Instead, we should imitate good. (Demetrius given as a good example in contrast to Diotrephes – Demetrius is of the truth).
11. The Position of Truth and Love in Our Relationships
    1. **Our relationships one to another** – our fellowship – is based upon our individual relationships with God – **1 John 1:3, 7**
       1. If two have fellowship with God, they have fellowship with each other.
       2. When one is in fellowship with God, and another is not, they don’t have fellowship with each other.
    2. **The relationship of truth and love:**
       1. **2 John 1-2** – The love we feel and express toward each other find’s its origin in the truth – hence the commonality.
          1. This gives a hint of what it truly means to love the brethren.
          2. **You love them in the realm of truth – not outside of it.**
       2. **2 John 5-6** – we are commanded by Christ to love one another.
          1. ***“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35***).
          2. **How do we love one another – KEEP GOD’S COMMANDMENTS.**
             1. To love each other is to keep God’s commandments, and to keep God’s commandments is to love each other.
             2. **Implications:**

One cannot claim that an action toward a brother is out of love if it isn’t according to truth.

One cannot claim that he is acting according to truth toward a brother if he is being unloving.

***“[speak] the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).***

1. When One Does Not Walk in Truth
   1. **2 John 9-11** – When one does not walk in truth he is not to be received.
      1. **(v. 9)** – doctrine of Christ = truth = all of the gospel (NOT SIMPLY THE TEACHING ABOUT CHRIST’S NATURE – **v. 7**)
         1. This one does not have God!
         2. This is what John said was the foundation of fellowship with God, abiding in Christs doctrine – Word of life.
      2. **(vv. 10-11)** – one who IS abiding in the doctrine of Christ is not to receive one who IS NOT abiding in the doctrine of Christ.
         1. To receive such a one is to align yourself with him – share in his evil.
         2. THUS **– (vv. 6-8)** – We are to walk according to His commandments to have life, **so we NEED TO BEWARE of false teachers lest we step out of the truth, and LOSE OUR SALVATION (v. 8)**.
   2. Is it loving to receive one who does not abide in Christ’s doctrine?
      1. NO – remember the relationship between love and truth – **2 John 1-2, 5-6**
      2. One cannot have fellowship with one who does not abide in truth in the name of love!
2. When One Does Walk in Truth
   1. **We know how we are to act toward one who does not walk in truth. What about with those who walk in truth?**
   2. **3 John 5-8 –** When brethren come who bear the truth we are to extend our hand of fellowship.
      1. **(vv. 5-7)** – Gaius had shown hospitality toward brethren (even those he didn’t specifically know) who were teachers of truth.
         1. He does faithfully.
         2. He does well.
         3. **2 John 5** – because we are commanded to love one another.
      2. **(v. 8)** – When such is done for a faithful brother, especially one who is a teacher of the truth, YOU SHARE IN THAT WORK.
         1. This is true for OUR GOOD.
         2. WHICH SHOWS – **2 John 11** – IS TRUE FOR OUR BAD.
   3. **Sadly, there are times when a person of pride does not wish to show love to the faithful:**
      1. **3 John 9** – Diotrephes did not receive the apostle.
         1. Loved preeminence – He did not want the attention to be on John.
         2. Even though John brought the truth, Diotrephes DID NOT RECEIVE HIM – such was sinful.
      2. **3 John 10** – He not only rejected John, but any faithful preacher/teacher/brother who came along.
         1. He did not extend fellowship and love to any faithful brethren that came.
         2. He punished those who did. (Perhaps Diotrephes was an elder abusing his power.)
         3. **(v. 11)** – John calls this behavior evil.
      3. **1 John 3:11-18** – The behavior of Diotrephes is text book hatred that John wrote about in his first epistle.
      4. **We MUST receive those who are faithful if the opportunity arises.**

**Conclusion**

1. The topic of fellowship is not difficult to understand.
2. **It becomes difficult when the application is to be made, but there are obstinate hearts resisting the truth of God.**
3. If we but wish to be in fellowship with God continually we will walk in truth, and practice the precepts of fellowship with each other that He has given.