

1 JOHN 1:1-2:2

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete. ⁵This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth ⁷But 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, purifies us from all sin. ⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.
2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

THERE IS A STORY ABOUT A YOUNG WOMAN TRAVELING ALONE IN A HONDA CIVIC ON A HIGHWAY FROM ALBERTA, CANADA TO THE YUKON.

SHE STAYED IN A MOTEL JUST BELOW THE SUMMIT AND PLANNED AN EARLY START UP TO THE TOP OF WHITEHORSE MOUNTAIN.

TWO TRUCKERS WERE AT BREAKFAST NEAR HER AND THEY GOT INTO A CONVERSATION.

WHEN THE WOMAN TOLD THEM HER TRAVEL PLAN THE TRUCKERS SAID THEY WOULD ESCORT HER, ONE IN FRONT AND ONE BEHIND TO HELP ASSURE HER SAFETY.

THIS IS NOT UNLIKE ONE OF THE PURPOSES OF THE CHURCH, TO HELP ONE ANOTHER ALONG THE WAY.

THE LETTER OF 1 JOHN WAS WRITTEN TO ENCOURAGE AND INSPIRE BELIEVERS TO GREATER UNITY IN LIVING OUT THEIR FAITH IN, AND WITNESS TO, JESUS CHRIST.

THE LETTER PROVIDES US WITH SOME IMPORTANT INSIGHT INTO THE ISSUES OF SIN AND FELLOWSHIP.

IT REMINDS US THAT NEITHER SIN NOR FELLOWSHIP SHOULD BE SEEN AS BEING SUPERFICIAL OCCURRENCES IN THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE.

JOHN WEAVES TOGETHER THE STRANDS OF FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP, SIN AND FORGIVENESS INTO THE FABRIC OF THE LIFE OF INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS AND THE CHURCH.

HIS TEACHING WAS VERY MUCH NEEDED IN JOHN'S OWN TIME, SINCE IN SPITE OF OUR OFTEN NOSTALGIC VIEW OF THE EARLY CHURCH- MANY BELIEVERS DID NOT GET ALONG WITH EACH OTHER BACK THEN ANY BETTER THAN CHRISTIANS DO TODAY.

THEN AS NOW THERE WERE CONFLICTS WITHIN AND BETWEEN CHURCHES. THERE WERE PROBLEMS WITH LEADERSHIP- FIGHTING BETWEEN PASTORS AND ELDERS AND LAITY.

THERE WERE DISAGREEMENTS ABOUT BELIEF AND CONDUCT, AS WELL AS LACK OF COMMITMENT AMONG LEADERS AND MEMBERS WITHIN CHURCHES.

AND SO JOHN'S WORDS CAN BE AS HELPFUL FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY- AS THEY WERE FOR THE ORIGINAL RECIPIENTS OF HIS WRITING.

BUT ONE OF THE PROBLEMS WITH UNDERSTANDING JOHN'S MESSAGE TODAY IS THAT MOST PEOPLE HAVE A NARROW VIEW OF FELLOWSHIP.

INDEED, UNLESS WE REALLY TAKE THE TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT -WE TEND TO CONFINE FELLOWSHIP TO EATING AND HANGING OUT TOGETHER.

IN FACT MOST CHURCHES HAVE ONE ROOM, "THE FELLOWSHIP HALL", DEDICATED TO THAT PURPOSE.

THE PROBLEM IS, WHILE FOOD AND FUN ARE A PART OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, THEY ARE ONLY A SMALL PART.

THE CHURCH IS THE COMMUNITY CALLED TOGETHER BY GOD TO FOSTER CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

BUT TO REALLY UNDERSTAND THIS FELLOWSHIP WE FIRST NEED TO THINK ABOUT GOD-- FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT, BECAUSE -CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP BEGINS WITH GOD.

GOD'S VERY NATURE, AS REVEALED TO US IN SCRIPTURE, IS ONE GOD IN THREE PERSONS- ONE GOD IN PERFECT COMMUNION WITH GOD'S SELF.

THIS IS AT THE HEART OF FELLOWSHIP, WHICH IS- UNION, COMMUNION, SHARING, AND PARTNERSHIP.

AND SO, CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP BEGINS WITH EACH PERSON'S FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

THE DOOR TO TRUE FELLOWSHIP IS OPENED UP BY JESUS AS THE LINES OF AN OLD-TIME SONG EXPLAINS:

“WHAT A FELLOWSHIP, WHAT A JOY DIVINE, LEANING ON THE EVERLASTING ARMS. WHAT A BLESSEDNESS, WHAT A PEACE IS MINE LEANING ON THE EVERLASTING ARMS.”

INDEED- LEANING ON JESUS, WHO REVEALED GOD'S STEADFAST AND ENDURING LOVE FOR US BY—HIS LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION, IS WHERE OUR FELLOWSHIP IS BORN.

THIS FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IS WHAT ENABLES, AS WELL AS REQUIRES OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS.

THIS IS HOW, WHEN CHURCH BUILDINGS WERE SHUT DOWN BY COVID; AND EVEN WHEN SOME PEOPLE ARE UNABLE TO COME TO CHURCH TO WORSHIP FOR OTHER REASONS, THE BOND OF FELLOWSHIP REMAINS.

THINK OF A CROSS: CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP IS BOTH HORIZONTAL-GOD AND YOU, AND VERTICAL- YOU AND OTHERS WHO ARE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. AND JESUS IS IN THE CENTER.

CONSEQUENTLY, TRUE FELLOWSHIP HAPPENS WHEN WE OPEN OURSELVES UP TO GOD AND TO ONE ANOTHER. THIS IS WHAT MAKES OUR RELATIONSHIP AS CHRISTIANS A STRONG BOND.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP IS MEANT TO CREATE DEEP AND ABIDING RELATIONSHIPS, ONES THAT SHARE BLESSINGS AND CHALLENGES, JOYS AND SORROWS.

THIS KIND OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CANNOT BE CONFINED TO A ROOM OR EVEN A BUILDING, INDEED THE WORLD IS NOT LARGE ENOUGH TO CONTAIN IT.

THE PROBLEM IS- RELATIONSHIPS ARE COMPLICATED, WHICH MAKES FELLOWSHIP AS MUCH A CHALLENGE AS IT IS A GIFT.

THE ROOT OF THIS DIFFICULTY CAN BE DESCRIBED USING A SINGLE WORD- “SIN”.

THINK ABOUT ADAM AND EVE, AND THE FIRST THING SIN DID- IT BROKE THEIR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, AS WELL AS THEIR FELLOWSHIP WITH EACH OTHER.

JOHN SPEAKS TO HIS READERS ABOUT THE REALITY OF SIN, EVEN AMONG CHRISTIANS.

HE REFUTES THOSE WHO DENY THEIR OWN SINFULNESS, AS NOT BEING HONEST WITH GOD AND ONE'S SELF.

JOHN INSISTS THAT THE ONLY WAY TO HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IS TO LIVE A LIFE THAT CONTINUES TO CONFESS BEING A SINNER, AND SEEKING FORGIVENESS.

JOHN SPEAKS FIRST ABOUT HOW HAVING FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD MEANS WE DESIRE TO PUT SIN BEHIND US, WE STRIVE TO BE OBEDIENT TO GOD-AND SO WE WALK IN HIS LIGHT.

BUT JOHN ALSO REMINDS HIS READERS THAT WHILE BEING SINLESS OR PERFECT IS OUR GOAL-WE WILL FAIL, NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE WANT TO OBEY GOD.

HE FURTHER EXPLAINS THOSE WHO SAY THAT THEY NO LONGER SIN ARE LYING, AND DECEIVE THEMSELVES.

THEY, IN ESSENCE, BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST GOD WHEN THEY DENY BEING SINNERS.

THUS JOHN CALLS HIS READERS TO WALK IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD GOD, BECAUSE HIS LIGHT NOT ONLY EXPOSES OUR SIN, BUT ILLUMINATES THE PATH OF FORGIVENESS AND NEW LIFE IN CHRIST.

TRULY, CHRISTIAN HOPE IS NOT BASED ON OUR ABILITY TO BE RIGHTEOUS ON OUR OWN, BUT ONLY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

GOD IS ALWAYS SHOWING US THE WAY TO TRAVEL, BUT WE MUST BE WILLING TO WALK IN HIS LIGHT, IN FELLOWSHIP.

IN ORDER FOR US TO WALK IN THE LIGHT- CHRISTIANS ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE REMINDER OF HOW JESUS MAKES CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP AND HIS CHURCH POSSIBLE.

JOHN CALLS JESUS OUR ADVOCATE, OUR DEFENSE ATTORNEY WHO DOES NOT TRY TO PROVE OUR INNOCENCE, OR GET US DECLARED NOT GUILTY.

INSTEAD JESUS, BY HIS OWN BLOOD, PAID THE PRICE OF OUR SIN-AND SO HE PROVIDES THE GUILTY WITH A FULL PARDON, WHICH MAINTAINS OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

AND JOHN'S POINT ABOUT NOT WALKING IN DARKNESS, NOR DENYING OUR OWN SINFULNESS IS-- IN ORDER TO BE FORGIVEN WE MUST CONFESS OUR SIN TO GOD.

INDEED CONFESSION-TRUE ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND REGRET FOR OUR SIN IS WHAT ENABLES US TO BE PARDONED AND CLEANSED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

THE APOSTLES CREED CONVEYS THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH HELPING US WITH THIS.

FIRST WE CONFESS FAITH IN GOD THE FATHER, AND GOD THE SON. WE PROCLAIM JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

THEN IN THE LAST SECTION OF THE CREED WE CONFESS: "I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS, THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN...."

THE CHURCH IS HOLY IN THAT IS WAS CREATED BY JESUS, SET ASIDE FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONTINUING HIS MISSION, AND FOR HIS FOLLOWERS TO SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER.

THE CHURCH IS CATHOLIC- MEANING UNIVERSAL BECAUSE IT IS FORMED BY CHRISTIANS FROM EVERY PLACE AND RACE AND ETHNIC GROUP.

THEREFORE, ALL WHO CONFESS JESUS AS LORD AND SAVIOR ARE IN COMMUNION WITH GOD AND EACH OTHER.

AND THIS COMMUNION IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN WON FOR US ALL BY JESUS CHRIST.

BUT OUR FELLOWSHIP IS NOT THE GOAL, IT IS THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH WE CAN BEST FULFILL CHRIST'S COMMISSION TO MAKE DISCIPLES, AND TO SHARE HIS LOVE.

THUS JESUS IS AT THE CENTER OF OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND WITH ALL CHRISTIANS.

THIS IS WHAT MAKES THE CHURCH DIFFERENT FROM SOCIAL CLUBS OR SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS.

THIS IS WHY JOHN DESIRED PEOPLE TO HAVE FAITH IN CHRIST, BECAUSE FAITH LEADS TO FORGIVENESS, WHICH CREATES FELLOWSHIP- AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP LEADS TO JOY.

JOHN CHALLENGES CHRISTIANS TODAY, LIKE HE DID TO THOSE WHO FIRST READ HIS LETTER.

HE ENCOURAGES US TO: NOT SETTLE FOR AN ABSTRACT KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, BUT INSTEAD TO SEEK A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH CHRIST.

AND CHRIST, THROUGH JOHN'S WORDS, CHALLENGES US NOT TO SETTLE FOR MINIMAL FELLOWSHIP.

INSTEAD JESUS DESIRES US TO LONG FOR, AS WELL AS SEEK, THE HOLY SPIRIT'S HELP TO: WORK TOWARDS THE DEEPER COMMUNION WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER- HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION PROVIDES.

ANOTHER WAY TO DESCRIBE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP IS:
“SHARED LIFE” OR A “PARTNERSHIP IN CHRIST”.

GOD OFFERS US AN ILLUSTRATION OF THIS FROM NATURE. WE
ARE ALL FAMILIAR WITH GEESE, WE SEE THEM OFTEN ENOUGH.

GEESE LIVE IN A KIND OF NATURAL FELLOWSHIP FORMED BY
INSTINCT FOR THEIR MUTUAL SURVIVAL AND BENEFIT.

WE HAVE ALL SEEN HOW THEY FLY IN A “V” FORMATION, THIS
PATTERN MAKES FLYING EASIER.

AND WHEN THE LEAD GOOSE IS TIRED, IT DROPS BACK AND
ANOTHER TAKES ITS PLACE.

THESE TWO TRAITS PROVIDE US WITH A MODEL OF WORKING
TOGETHER.

GEESE HONK AS THEY FLY, WHICH IS HOW THEY ENCOURAGE
EACH OTHER ON THE JOURNEY.

SIMILARLY CHRISTIANS ARE MEANT TO ENCOURAGE ONE
ANOTHER, AS WE WORSHIP AND SERVE CHRIST TOGETHER.

FINALLY, GEESE HAVE A SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR A
SICK OR INJURED BIRD.

WHEN A BIRD FALLS OUT OF FORMATION BECAUSE IT CANNOT
FLY ANY FURTHER, TWO OTHERS JOIN IT.

THEY STAY WITH THAT BIRD UNTIL IT EITHER DIES OR CAN FLY
AGAIN.

THEN THE BIRDS SET OUT TO REJOIN THEIR FLOCK OR
ANOTHER ONE TO CONTINUE THE JOURNEY.

JOHN, IN HIS LETTER WANTED FELLOW CHRISTIANS TO
UNDERSTAND THEIR NEED NOT ONLY FOR GOD, BUT FOR EACH
OTHER.

SIMILARLY, IN HIS LETTER TO THE ROMANS PAUL INSTRUCTED
THOSE WHO WERE STRONGER TO PUT UP WITH THE WEAKER
AMONG THEM.

ELSEWHERE HE WROTE ABOUT BUILDING ONE ANOTHER UP,
AND THE CHURCH BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST WHICH NEEDS
TO WORK TOGETHER.

IN OTHER WORDS, THE CHURCH IS A FELLOWSHIP OF
BELIEVERS WORKING WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND ONE
ANOTHER TO SERVE THE LORD.

AND SO THIS LETTER FROM JOHN, IS JUST ONE OF MANY
PLACES IN THE BIBLE THAT REMIND US OF THE POWER OF
CHRIST’S DEATH AND RESURRECTION, WHICH REMOVED THE
BARRIER BETWEEN US AND OUR HOLY GOD.

THIS REMOVAL IS OUR MOTIVATION TO CLASP THE HAND JESUS
EXTENDS TO US, AND TO REACH OUT TO CLASP HANDS WITH
OTHERS WHO ARE JOINED TO CHRIST, AND THUS ARE ALSO IN
FELLOWSHIP WITH US.

THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF THE CHURCH AND ITS PURPOSE SO
THAT TOGETHER WE MAY SERVE CHRIST BETTER THAN ALONE.

LET US PRAY: WE GIVE YOU THANKS FOR YOUR STEADFAST
LOVE THAT ENDURES FOREVER, AND THAT BY YOUR LOVE YOU
SHOW YOUR DESIRE TO BE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH US.

WE HUMBLY BOW BEFORE JESUS, THROUGH WHOM THIS
FELLOWSHIP IS POSSIBLE, FOR BY HIS BLOOD ALL WHO
CONFESS AND REPENT ARE FORGIVEN.

SEND YOUR SPIRIT, WE PRAY, TO STRENGTHEN THE FAITHFUL,
AROUSE THE CARELESS, COMFORT THE SORROWFUL, GIVE
PEACE TO THE DYING, AND HEAL THE SICK.

LORD IMPLANT WITHIN US THE SEEDS OF A DEEP AND ABIDING
FELLOWSHIP WITH YOU AND ONE ANOTHER, SO YOUR LIGHT
WILL SHINE THROUGH US IN OUR WORDS AND DEEDS, BOTH AS
A CHURCH AND AS INDIVIDUALS.

HEAR OUR PRAYER O HEAVENLY FATHER, THROUGH CHRIST,
WITH CHRIST, IN CHRIST, IN THE UNITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,
ALL GLORY, AND HONOR ARE YOURS ALMIGHTY GOD, NOW
AND FOREVER AMEN.

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