

1ST JOHN



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For I have never, like many, delighted to hear those that tell many things, but those that teach the truth, neither those that record foreign precepts, but those that are given from the Lord, to our faith, and that come from the truth itself. – Papias

Focus	Basis of Fellowship		Behavior of Fellowship	
Divisions	Conditions for Fellowship	Cautions to Fellowship	Characteristics of Fellowship	Consequences of Fellowship
	1:1 – 2:14	2:15 – 2:27	2:28 – 5:5	5:6 – 5:21
Topics	Meaning of Fellowship		Manifestation of Fellowship	
	Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Place	Written in Ephesus			
Time	A.D. 66 – 96			

Introduction

1st John is the Book of Fellowship. John reflects a lifetime of meditation on and appropriation of all that Jesus had commanded (Matthew 28:20). Much of what Jesus taught the disciples in the upper room and walk to the garden discourse (John 13–17) is expanded and explained. John's desire is that his children, those that believed in Jesus through his word (John 17:20), would abide in Christ, have their joy made full and their love perfected. Walking in the light and walking in fellowship with the Father and the Son are dominant themes. Many antichrists have gone forth into the world, and there are many snares and dangers to fellowship. John urges his hearers to remain faithful to the testimony that they have received concerning the One who is from the beginning.

Although the author is not named in the text, 1st John was universally received, accepted and cited by the early church fathers who attributed it to John the son of Zebedee. The early church was consistent in ascribing the authorship of the Fourth Gospel and 1st John to the apostle John. Possible allusions appear in (1) *Didache* (ca. A.D. 90–120; 10:5–6 / 1st John 2:17); (2) Clement of Rome (ca. A.D. 96; 1st Clem. 49:5; 50:3 / 1st John 2:5; 4:12, 17, 18); (3) the *Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. A.D. 130; 5:9–11; 12:10 / 1st John 4:2; 2nd John 7); and (4) Polycarp (ca. A.D. 135; Phil 7:1 / 1st John 2:22; 4:2–3; 2nd John 7). Papias, who knew John (and was born ca. A.D. 60), is the first person to make a specific reference to a Johannine letter as the work of the apostle John in his *Exposition of Oracles of the Lord* (written ca. A.D. 130 and cited in Eusebius [*H.E.* 3.39.17]). Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 180) specifically makes reference to 1st and 2nd John (*H.E.* 3.16.5; 3.16.8), and attributes both, as well as the Fourth Gospel, to the apostle John. Clement of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 180) writes of “the larger epistle” of John the apostle (see *Strom.* 2.15.66).

John made four purpose statements in the Epistle. First, he wrote to promote his readers' fellowship and joy. “We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete” (1st John 1:4). Second, he wrote to help readers avoid the pitfalls of sin, yet find forgiveness when they stumbled. “My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin” (1st John 2:1). Third, he wrote to protect believers from false teachers. “I have written these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you” (1st John 2:26). Finally, he wrote so they might know they had eternal life. “I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1st John 5:13). This last purpose statement governs the other three and brings them together in a unifying theme.

Vocabulary in 1st John is striking in similarity to the gospel of John. The term παράκλητος occurs only five times in Scripture, and all occurrences are in John's writings (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1st John 2:1). The word μονογενής as an expression of the Son's unique relationship to the Father occurs in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18, and 1st John 4:9. Implicit claims of apostolic, eyewitness testimony are found in 1st John 1:1–4; 4:6. Evidence both internal and external favors the view that the apostle John is the human author

(the Holy Spirit is the divine Author) of this scripture inspired by God (2nd Tim 3:16). The writing style is so close to that of the Fourth Gospel that common authorship is obvious. The verdict of the early church was unanimous in its affirmation of John the apostle as author of the Fourth Gospel.

Dating cannot be certain, but tradition is strong that John spent his later years in the city of Ephesus ministering to the churches of Asia Minor and wrote his gospel and letters there. Irenaeus wrote, “John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia” (*Against Heresies*, 3.1.1). Eighty percent of the verses in 1st John reflect ideas and themes found in the Gospel. This confirms the assertion that the readers were previously familiar, at the least, with John’s teaching, but it also strengthens the probability that they possessed that teaching in the written form of John’s Gospel. 2nd John appears to address similar issues but in a limited, first defense scope in which John hopes to resolve the issues with a confidently expected future visit. The conclusion from all information gives us a rough dating of 66-96 AD in Ephesus with 2nd John coming first followed by the gospel then 1st John.

Conditions for Fellowship

1st John 1:1-2:14

1. What was from the beginning: A collective encompassing all that Jesus is; His Deity, humanity, eternal life, voice, physical body and message, the beginning of God’s creation (1st John 1:1; Revelation 3:14; 1st John 2:13-14; Colossians 1:15-20; Proverbs 8:22-31).
 - a. What we have heard indicating all apostolic witnesses especially writers of the New Testament.
 - b. What we have seen with our eyes clarifies the visual perception.
 - c. What we have looked at means to examine or, militarily, to reconnoiter.
 - d. Touched with our hands establishes the corporeality of Jesus’ earthly life and resurrection.
 - e. The eyewitnesses heard, saw, and touched the Word of life who had come in the flesh (1st John 1:2; John 1:1, 4, 14).
 - f. The intended outcome of the apostolic proclamation was fellowship, the major theme of the epistle (1st John 1:3, 6, 7).
 - g. The intended outcome of the written testimony was fullness of joy (1st John 1:4; John 3:29; 15:11; 16:24).

2. The message we have heard involves the essence of who God is how we can and cannot have fellowship with Him (1st John 1:5-10).
 - a. John begins with God's holiness and presents hypothetical conditions ("If We") either in accordance with or antithetical to His holiness exposing all false claims of fellowship (1st John 2:9-11; 3:15; 4:20 cf. 1st John 1:7) and revealing the reality of the Spiritual believer's walk with God (1st John 1:7; 2:4, 9-11; Proverbs 4:18-19).
 - b. Walking in the light is not a question of how we walk, but where we walk and with whom we walk (1st John 1:5-7; Genesis 5:22, 24; 6:9; 17:1; 48:15; Micah 6:8; Colossians 2:6).
 - c. Walking in the light with Him exposes any darkness in us and the blood of Jesus is constantly cleansing us from sin in this state (1st John 1:7; Ephesians 5:8).
 - d. Just as we cannot walk in darkness with the light, we cannot have fellowship with one another without walking in the light (1st John 1:7).
 - e. A denial of the sin nature in the believer shows a lack of truth in the soul (1st John 1:8; Romans 3:9ff; James 3:2; Galatians 3:22).
 - f. Confession is an agreement with God about our sins (1st John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13; Psalm 32:3-5; 51:2-5; **John 13:4-11** 1st Corinthians 11:31-32; cf. Jonah 3; Ezra 9:10-10:1; Daniel 9:1-19).
 - g. A denial of personal sins is satanic boast against God and reveals the lack of a renewed mind in His word (1st John 1:10; Psalm 130:3; Romans 12:1-2).

3. Jesus our intercessor and propitiator (1st John 2:1-2).
 - a. The purpose for writing these things is for us to avoid sin and remain in fellowship. When we fail to do so, Jesus intercedes for us (1st John 2:1; Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25).
 - b. Jesus' "once for all" sacrifice was for all sins, all people and all times (1st John 2:2; 4:10, 14; 1st Peter 3:18; Hebrews 9:26, 28; 10:10, 14).

4. Coming to know Him (1st John 2:3-6).
 - a. A growing intimacy with Him brought about by having our minds renewed in His word (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23).
 - b. Ἀγάπη Love is a reflection and result of fellowship with God (cf. 1st John 4:20f.).
 - c. The child of God delights in obedience to the will of God (John 4:34; Psalm 40:8; 112:1; 119:16, 24, 47, 92; Job 23:12; Jeremiah 15:16). This willing obedience, which comes about as a manifestation of fellowship and reciprocal love with God, is definitive evidence that we are being conformed to the image of Christ.

- d. John's usage of "in Him" and "abides in Him" in 1st John is not the same as Paul's usage of the phrase "in Christ". Paul reveals positional truth while John describes our fellowship with God. In contrast, Jesus discusses positional truth (**John 15:1-6**), and then the reciprocal / experiential (**John 15:7-10**).
5. The Old/ New Commandment. (1st John 2:7-11).
 - a. This is how Jesus taught His disciples (John 15:10, 12) and how he taught the law (Matthew 7:12; 22:37-40) 1st John 3:22-23; 2nd John 5-6. As these texts show, the commandment to love one another summarizes all of the Savior's commandments. (Similarly, Paul could summarize the law under the commandment to love one's neighbor: Romans 13:8-10.)
 - b. In the light of verses 8 to 11, the old commandment is nothing less than the one spoken by Jesus (John 13:34). Thus, to "walk just as He walked" (1st John 2:6; 2nd John 6) is to walk in love.
 - c. In a sense, the command is new as it is new in Him (John 13:34-35), true in Him (John 15:12-15) and true in you (1st John 3:14-16; 1st John 4:7-11).
 - d. Jesus Prophetic Pantomime of love (**John 13:1-20**).
 - e. The darkness in the life of the believer is not already gone (past away), but is passing away as the believer undergoes spiritual growth (1st John 2:8; Romans 13:12 cf. Matthew 13:23; Colossians 1:6, 10; 1st Thessalonians 4:1; 2nd Peter 3:18).
 - f. Our obedience in carrying out the command to love one another has the character of truth, both in us as we do it and in Him who gave and exemplified it. Such obedience reflects the genuine light which is already shining in us (1st John 2:8; 2nd Corinthians 4:6. Ephesians 5:8).
 6. Abiding and Overcoming in Him from the New Birth to Maturity.
 - a. All saints are children in our position before the Father. This also refers to the newly saved (1st John 2:12).
 - b. In the Gospel (John 16:33), First Epistle (1st John 4:4; 5:4-5, 19 and Revelation (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 5:5; 12:11; 15:2; 21:7) alike—the theme of overcoming is present, and in all it is through Christ, the supreme Overcomer, that we overcome (1st John 2:13).
 - c. Experiential victory is in view here as well, yet the believer's victory is still in Christ as seen in his abiding relationship with Christ and His Word and works. Through them the Believer operating in the light grows more intimate with God and endures through afflictions and trials (1st John 2:14; Revelation 2:26; Romans 5-8; James 1:1-25).

Cautions to Fellowship

1st John 2:15-27

1. The Love of the World vs. the Love of the Father
 - a. The three components of the things that belong to the satanic system of this age: The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life (1st John 2:16).
 - b. The flesh and its desires are set against the Spirit (Romans 7:18, 23; 8:5ff; Galatians 5:16-26; Romans 13:14).
 - c. Our Identity must be revealed in doing His Will (1st John 2:17; 3:7-10).

The Poetic Breakdown		
2:15	Love of the World	Love of the Father
	↓	↓
2:16	Comes From the World	Comes From the Father
	↓	↓
2:17	The World is Passing Away	The One Who Does the Will of God Abides Forever
	↓	↓
	Leading to Death	Manifesting Life

2. The Last Hour – Having an Eschatological viewpoint in the Last Hour.
 - a. The Blessed Hope (Titus 2:11-14; 2nd Peter 3:3; 2nd Timothy 3:1-7).
 - b. What sort of people should we be (2nd Peter 3:11; Romans 13:11ff; Hebrews 10:24-25)?

3. The Antichrist(s)

- a. Substitution for Christ and opposition to Christ – False Christs, Antichrists and False Prophets (2nd Peter 2:1; 1st John 4:1ff).
- b. The focus is not the antichrist (singular) but the antichrists (plural)
- c. Deceivers (1st Timothy 4:1; Titus 1:10 2nd John 7).
- d. They Went Out From Us Revealed, Manifested and Unmasked (Acts 15:24 HCSB; Acts 20:30; Galatians 2:4).
- e. What Spirit is Being Followed (1st John 4:4-6)
- f. Heretical Christology Test – Who is Jesus and is heaven free?
- g. The Gospel and the Eternal Security of the Believer (Titus 3:3-7; Hebrews 7:25; 10:14; John 6:39; 10:27-30; Rom 8:31-39).

4. The assurance that we know the Truth (1st John 2:20-23).

- a. The Anointing (1st John 2:20; 2nd Corinthians 1:21-22)
- b. You know all things or you all know (1st John 2:20; Proverbs 28:5; John 14:26; 16:13; 1st Corinthians 2:15, 16)?
- c. Maturity and All Things (1st John 2:27; Hebrews 5:14).
- d. Understanding the Truth – Perception, Comprehension and Apprehension (cf. John 4:19; Acts 10:34; Ephesians 3:18-19; Philippians 3:12).
- e. The assurance that we possess the truth is the key to resisting false teaching (1st John 2:21; 3:19; Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2; 2nd Timothy 3:16-17).
- f. Doctrinal error is not to be treated as simply a flawed conception of the truth from which we can possibly learn something (Romans 16:17 cf. 1st Timothy 1:3; 6:3; 2nd Thessalonians 3:6, 14; Titus 1:14; 3:10).

5. Abide in the Father and the Son (1st John 2:24-27)

- a. Pay Close Attention So That We Don't Drift Away – Hebrews 2:1
- b. “The Truth Will Make You Free” is Conditional (1st John 2:24; John 8:31; 2nd John 9).
- c. Reciprocal Abiding with the Father and the Son (1st John 2:24; John 14:23).
- d. The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit and the full blessings of the Church age saint's spiritual perception of God's Word (1st John 2:27; 1st Corinthians 2:10-16).
 - 1) A living human spirit (Colossians 2:13; Ephesians 2:5).
 - 2) The indwelling Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:11).

- 3) The reciprocal love abiding relationship with the Father and the Son (John 14:21-23).
- 4) Being spiritual (1st John 1:7; 1st Corinthians 3:1; Galatians 6:1)
- 5) A complete canon of scripture (2nd Peter 1:3; 2nd Timothy 3:16-17).

Characteristics of Fellowship

1st John 2:28-5:5

1. **Love is given** (1st John 2:28-3:15).
 - a. The Children of God are confident when/ if they abide in Him (1st John 2:28) (inclusio—2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14).
 - 1) Confidence at His Appearing (1st John 2:28).
 - 2) Confidence in Prayer (1st John 3:21; 5:14).
 - 3) Confidence in the Day of Judgment (1st John 4:17).
 - b. Everyone who displays His righteousness through their actions can be identified as a child of God (1st John 2:29; 1st John 3:7-10).
 - c. “Look at what kind of love the Father has given us, that we should be identified as His children.”
 - 1) This is a current condition that causes conflict with the world (1st John 3:1).
 - 2) We will be like Him (Philippians 3:20-21).
 - 3) Fixing our confident expectation on this is purification (1st John 3:3).
 - d. The children of God and the children of the devil present evidence for which standard they are operating under (1st John 3:4-12).
 - 1) No one who is born of / abides in Him sins (1st John 3:6, 9).
 - 2) Saints still have a sinner in them. When they sin, it is walking in darkness and operating by the sin nature and the principles of the world. In this way, they identify themselves in operation as children of the devil (1st John 3:8; Romans 7:14-25; Matthew 16:21-23).
 - e. The contrasts (1st John 3:13-16).
 - 1) The conflict between God and the κοσμος system (1st John 3:13-15).
 - 2) The world hates children of God (1st John 3:13; John 15:18-21).
 - 3) Death and Life (1st John 3:14).
 - 4) Hate and Love, murder and self-sacrifice (1st John 3:15, 16).
 - 5) The believer finding a dwelling place in death (1st John 3:14) vs. eternal life finding a dwelling place in the believer (1st John 3:15).

2. **Love is experienced** (1st John 3:16-4:6).

- a. Two examples of sacrificial love: The ultimate and the practical (1st John 3:16-17; John 13:1-20; James 2:15). Note: All within the context of brothers in Christ (saints).
- b. Love operates on the basis of truth (1st John 3:18-19; 2nd John 1-2).
- c. Confidence before God is based on honest assessment and operation in love and truth (1st John 3:19-22).
- d. This is His commandment (1st John 3:23).
 - 1) Believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ (John 1:12; 3:18; 20:31).
 - 2) Love one another (John 15:12-17).
- e. The present reciprocal abiding of the command keeper (1st John 3:24).
- f. Knowing the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error (1st John 4:1-6).
 - 1) The κοσμος' message is contrary to God's message (1st Timothy 4:1; James 3:15).
 - 2) The world loves its own (John 15:19).
 - 3) A simple test of discernment (1st John 4:1-3).
 - 4) The antichrist agenda (1st John 4:3; 2:18, 22; 2nd John 7).

3. **Love is Perfected** (1st John 4:7-5:5).

- a. The Spirit of truth guides abiding saints into a life of love (1st John 4:7-21).
- b. Loving one another is dependent on the present condition of abiding (1st John 4:7-8).
- c. The ultimate example is given again as well as the obligation to reflect that divine example (1st John 4:9-11; 2:6; 3:16).
- d. No one has seen God the Father, yet we spiritually see Him as we come to know the One who is from the beginning (1st John 4:12a; John 1:18; 14:7-15; 1st Peter 1:8).
- e. If we "are loving" one another, God "is abiding" in us, and His love "is having been perfected" in us (1st John 4:12b).
- f. God's love is a reciprocal abiding love (1st John 4:16; John 14:21-23).
- g. Because of this reciprocal abiding love condition, God's love is in a state of having been perfected with us. The result is confidence at the Judgment seat of Christ. "As He is, so also are we in this world" reflects the reciprocal / experiential love relationship between the abiding saint and God in which love is perfected / matured / completed. It is the full experiential realization that we stand in relation to the Father in the same way Christ does (1st John 4:17).
- h. Fear is incompatible with love, and one operating within the abiding love conditions of verse 16 will be matured in love and have no fear of judgment (1st John 4:18).
- i. The reciprocal abiding love condition with God the Father and with His Son results in obedience that is not a burden, but a joy (1st John 5:1-3; 3:22; Hebrews 13:21; 1st Corinthians 15:10; Philippians 2:13).
- j. Our faith in Jesus Christ is the victory that overcomes the world, positionally and experientially (1st John 5:4-5).

- 1) Jesus is the One who has overcome the world and we are overcomers in Him (1st John 5:4; John 16:33).
- 2) Experiential victory is still in Jesus Christ (1st John 5:5).

Consequences of Fellowship

1st John 5:6-21

1. This is the One who came (1st John 5:6-8).
 - a. The water baptism of Christ was necessary to fulfill all righteousness. This event declared to humanity and angelicity the anointing of Jesus as the Christ (Matthew 3:13-17).
 - b. The blood was necessary to fulfill all righteousness. This event declared to humanity and angelicity the finished work of the Christ (Colossians 1:20; 2:15; cf. Those passing by Matthew 27:39-40).
 - c. The Spirit of truth testifies to this truth, being in agreement with the water and the Blood (Matthew 3:16f; John 15:26; Deuteronomy 17:6). Of particular interest for the present text is John 5:31-40 where the three witnesses are: (1) John the Baptist (verses 33-35), (2) Jesus' works (verse 36), and (3) the Father through the Scriptures (verses 37-39).

 2. The testimony of God vs. the testimony of men concerning His Son: No Contest (1st John 5:9-13).
 - a. The testimony is in the one believing in the Son of God (1st John 5:10; John 3:33; Romans 8:16).
 - b. The one not believing has called God a liar, because he has rejected His testimony.
 - c. God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son (1st John 5:11-13; 1:2; 2:25; John 3:36).

 3. Confidence in the prayer life of the abiding saint (1st John 5:14-17).
 - a. Ask according to His will (1st John 5:14; John 14:13; 16:26-27; 1 John 3:22; James 4:3).
 - b. If we fulfill the conditions of His will, we receive what we have asked for (1st John 5:15; John 14:13-15).
 - c. Verse 16 and 17 are not about the sin unto death, but are a love application toward brothers and sisters within the confident prayer life. We ask on behalf of the one sinning, we do not enquire about the sin unto death (1st John 5:16-17).

 4. John's wrap-up: What do we know (1st John 5:18-21)?
 - a. No one who is born of God sins (1st John 5:18; 3:9)
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- b. The divine nature within us is protected by the Divine, even in a world under the control of the evil one (1st John 5:18-19).
- c. We know that we are of God (1st John 5:19; 4:6).
- d. The whole world is in the power of the evil one (1st John 5:19; 4:4).
- e. The Son of God has come and we know Him and are in Him (1st John 5:20).
- f. He is the Genuine God from whom we have eternal life (1st John 5:20).
- g. Guard yourselves against imitations (1st John 5:21).