

Fellowship—Knowing the God of Light
1 John 2:3-11

By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His word and love one another (1 John 1:5, 10).

As a father protecting his little children, John warns his friends that the false teachers who have left their assemblies will steal the greatest joy any believer will ever know—the joy of life in the family of God. The theme of First John is *fellowship*—that experience of intimacy with Christ and His people only available to those who belong to Him. The passion of John is, “don’t lose it by listening to these lying teachers. True joy is based on apostolic truth and is only possible in fellowship with God” (1:1-4).

In the preamble to his book, 1:5-2:11, the Apostle discusses the nature of this fellowship he desires for his readers. True fellowship is for those who walk in the light—sin (darkness) will always break fellowship with a holy (all light) God. As we walk in the light, a growing desire to obey Him and love His people allows His love to have its way with us—and we come to really know the God of light:

Those who really know Christ live to _____ Him and _____ His people.

1 John: Life in the Family

Prologue—*call to fellowship*: John will be presenting the reality of life in Christ so that his readers may share the joy of apostolic fellowship with Christ and one another (1:1-4).

Preamble—*living in fellowship with God* (1:5-3:10).

Walking in God’s Light—*stay on the path of holiness* (1:5-2:2)

Knowing the God of Light—*follow Christ and love His people* (2:3-11)

As John refutes three false claims from the heretics’ teaching on knowing God, he answers one of the most important questions any Christian will ever ask, “Who can say they really know God?”

- I. I must obey God and love His people to really know Him well (2:3-11).
 - A. True fellowship with God means knowing Him by remaining attentive to His Word and loving to His children (3).
 1. Fellowship involves knowing God as an obedient child (3). Only those who keep His commandments can say they know they have come to know God (perfect indicative of γινωσκω—to know, here in the perfect tense it carries the idea of real and personal knowledge, see John 14:7-9 where the Lord challenged Philip’s knowledge of Him). τηρεω, to keep, watch over, guard, concern for, attentiveness to. This is not mere compliance but living with a concern for, attentiveness to His Word. It is much more proactive than simply not sinning or confession (1:5-2:2, walking in the light).
 2. How do we know who really knows God in this way? Three sets of false claims (‘ο λεγων—the one who says)/counter claims—what it really takes to come to know God (4-11).

Anyone who knows God must be in Him. While it is clear that everyone who believes in Christ is placed in Him (John 14:20, Ephesians 1:7), we must not conclude that those who claim to know Him are actually in Him. One indicator of being in Him is to see His love being perfected (a growing reality) in us, as we are attentive to His Word. John views this throughout his book as a secondary confirmatory experience to the promises of the free gift of eternal life and continuum of being in Him and abiding (4-5).

Anyone who knows God must abide in Him. Only those who walk in His footsteps by following the old/new commandment “know” (real, personal knowledge) God. Jesus gave this as a new commandment while walking on the earth—love one another (John 13:31-35), the message from the true light whose light is dawning (John 1:5, 9) in the passing darkness (1 John 2:17) in preparation of a new day (2 Peter 3:13), Jesus *loved* His own (John 13:1, vv 6-8).

Anyone who knows God must abide in the light. Only those who love their fellow Christians (*a brother*) abide in the light (fellowship, deeper knowledge, living in His presence). Those who hate their brother cause themselves and everyone else to stumble in the darkness (9-11).

B. The immediate context of 1 John 2:3-11 answers the question, “Who should you listen to? How can you tell if someone who claims to know God really does?”

1. Anyone who claims to know God but does not follow His commands (as a general trajectory and settled attitude in life) is lying. You should not listen to this person!
2. Anyone who claims to know God (walk in the light) but does not love his or her brothers and sisters in Christ is walking in a darkness that causes everyone to stumble. You should not listen to this person!

II. Fellowship with God (knowing the God of light) demands taking obedience as seriously as He does—especially His command to love one another (Selected Scripture).

A. True fellowship (knowledge of God) with God is only for those who are first “in Him” and then “abide in Him”.

1. *Fellowship*, or friendship with God, or knowing God, involves a deep experience of intimacy with Him based upon obedience, especially loving one another, and resulting in the sharing of intimate information (John 15:13-17).
2. *In Him* is the believer’s spiritual union with Christ (John 14:20)—the sharing of eternal life. In Christ is the redeemed person’s new environment in the sphere of resurrection life—the life of Christ Himself. Being in Christ frees believers from the bondage of sin to live righteously before God (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 3:24; Galatians 2:4; 17; Romans 6:11, 23; 8:2).
3. *Abide in Him* is the believers’ responsibility to live out the potential of union with Him (John 15:1-8) that results in the fellowship John describes in 1 John. Abiding in Him in 1 John terms is when we are walking in His light by acknowledging our sin and knowing the God of light by obeying His commands.

B. The broader application 1 John 2:3-11 helps answer the questions, “Do I really know God?” and “Who really knows God?”

1. Though our primary personal assurance lies in the laminated promises of God that whoever believes in Him has eternal life (John 6:47), the growing desire to keep His word, especially our love for one another, has a secondary confirmatory value that is very comforting to those who are growing in their knowledge of Him and fellowship with Him.
2. Those who claim to know Christ but have no desire to obey His word or hate other Christians may be categorized in one of three ways

A non-Christian: An unregenerate person who is simply confused about salvation. Often these people were raised in the church or have been exposed to religion and are not truly saved because they are depending on their works, not Christ. They have never believed in Jesus (1 John 5:11-13). ***A carnal Christian:*** A regenerate person who has a baby’s attitude because he or she is so new in the faith (1 Corinthians 3:1) or their flesh rather than the Spirit is controlling them, they are flesh-dominated (1 Corinthians 3:2-4). ***A tare:*** Unregenerate person planted by Satan to disrupt the work of the church. Tares closely resemble wheat, but are poisonous to human beings. Until Christ returns, both genuine believers and counterfeits will be allowed to grow together (Matthew 13:24-30).

