

# **FELLOWSHIP: AN UNDERSTANDING OF FAMILY**

## **I JOHN 1:5 – 2:11**

*SINCE WE ALL BECAME PART OF GOD'S FAMILY BECAUSE OF GOD'S LOVE,  
WE ARE TO CONTINUE IN THIS FAMILY LIVING IN LOVE  
TOWARDS GOD AND ONE ANOTHER.*

### **I. THE FOUNDATION OF FAMILY (VS 1:5-10)**

*If We Want To Enter God's Family And Remain In Good Standing, We Must Learn To Accept God's Way Of Living.*

- A. RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (5-6)
- B. RELATIONSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER (7)
- C. RELATIONSHIP WITH REALITY (8-10)

### **II. LIVING WITH LOVE TOWARDS GOD (2:1-6)**

*Jesus Said The Most Fundamental Way Of Being For Us Is To Love God With All Our Heart, With All Our Soul, With All Our Mind, And With All Our Strength.*

- A. GOD'S ACT OF LOVE (1-2)
- B. OUR ACT OF LOVE (3-6)

### **III. LIVING WITH LOVE TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER (7-11)**

*Jesus Said Our Love For God Further Expresses Itself In Loving One Another As God Loves Each One Of Us.*

- A. GOD'S COMMAND TO LOVE (7-8)
- B. A REFUSAL TO LOVE (9 & 11)
- C. A DESIRE TO LOVE (10)

## FELLOWSHIP: AN UNDERSTANDING OF FAMILY I JOHN 1:5 – 2:11

Last week we started our review of the *Purpose Driven Life*. Our first purpose in life is to love God. Since God created us, redeemed us, indwells us, and empowers us because of His love for us, our response is to love Him in return. The most fundamental way of being for us is love... love for God.

This morning, we are going to look at the purpose of **Fellowship**. In other words, we are to love one another. We are called on to meet one another's' spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. When we became Christians, we became God's children. God is our Father and we are brothers and sisters in the royal family.

Family is often a funny thing. That's a place where our self-centeredness seems to manifest itself frequently. During the Christmas season, when our kids were young, they tended to be crazy. One day they were really being bad. Luing and I sent them to their room. After about an hour, they came out of the room and stated, "We thought it over, talked about it, and then prayed."

"Fine," we said, "If you ask God to help you not misbehave, we are sure He will help you."

"Oh," they said, "We didn't ask God to help us not misbehave. We asked Him to give you two more patience to put up with us."

I think that's often the way we approach our relationship with God and with one another. More often I think we pray that God and others will put up with us, rather than ask God to make us better family members.

When we went through the *Purpose Driven Life* earlier, we defined fellowship as being in relationships where we meet one another's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. All the purposes overlap one another. However, in an overly simplistic way we could say that in worship, we pour out our love to God. In fellowship, we take the overflow of that love and pour it out on one another.

Instead of defining fellowship again, this morning I would like us to reflect on the foundation of fellowship. In other words, I want us to ask what our attitude and motivation for fellowship are. The main idea of this morning's message is this. **SINCE WE ALL BECAME PART OF GOD'S FAMILY BECAUSE OF GOD'S LOVE, WE ARE TO CONTINUE IN THIS FAMILY, LIVING IN LOVE TOWARDS GOD AND ONE ANOTHER.**

I think that most of us, who have been Christians for a long time, often forget where we came from. It doesn't matter if we are rich or poor, educated or uneducated, what race, nationality, or culture we came from. We were all saved by God's grace. We all shared the same eternal destiny. We were all headed for an eternity in hell. None of us were good ... not one of us.

### I. THE FOUNDATION OF FAMILY (VS 1:5-10)

*If We Want To Enter God's Family And Remain In Good Standing,  
We Must Learn To Accept God's Way Of Living.*

In chapter 1 verses 5-10, John describes the foundation of this family we call the church. **IF WE WANT TO ENTER GOD'S FAMILY AND REMAIN IN GOOD STANDING, WE MUST LEARN TO ACCEPT GOD'S WAY OF LIVING.** The word *confession* is going to stand out in verse 9. The word *confession* in Greek is a compound word. The word is *homologeîn*. *Homo* means the same. *Logeîn* means to say. So confession means to say the same thing. In this section, it will become clear that the foundation of belonging to God's family is that we are willing to agree with God. Our lives should be actions that say the same as God.

## A. RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (5-6)

Verses 5-6 demonstrate that our relationship with God is where it all starts. There are a lot of systems out there trying to pass themselves off as spirituality. And in our culture, we are taught to affirm all religions as equal. Let me just state this up front so there is no confusion as to where we stand at Devon Church. We are uniquely Christian. We believe there is no other God but the God of the Bible Who exists as One, in the Form of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Bible, New and Old Testaments are the inspired word of God. Look at verse 5. The Apostle John says, "This is the message He has given us to announce to you." John is saying that what follows here was given to directly from Jesus, Who is God the Son. This is an authoritative message. He continues, "God is light," and then emphasizes it by saying, "and there is no darkness in Him at all." Jesus said that He is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other way to God the Father but through Jesus. God has laid out the plan of salvation for us. Since the Bible is God's inspired word that guides us through life, if we reject it in any way, then we are walking in darkness. John is pretty emphatic here. Look at the end of verse 6. He says that if we don't submit to the word of God, then we are not living in the truth and we have no fellowship with God. God is the creator and ruler of the universe. There is no other God and there is no other way. He is pure and holy. In order to have fellowship with God we must say the same about Him that He says about Himself.

## B. RELATIONSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER (7)

Verses 5-6 talked about our fellowship with God being dependent on agreeing with God about Who He is. Verse 7 talks about what our relationship with one another is based on. Again, it is to agree with God. If we live in the light of God's presence, just as Jesus is, then we can have fellowship with one another. Again, our love for one another must come from the overflow of love between God and us. That's why believers are not to marry unbelievers. An unbeliever cannot possibly love you the way the Bible defines love. If true love comes as an overflow of God's love and ours, then an unbeliever doesn't have that love to give. We all entered the family of God the same way.

## C. RELATIONSHIP WITH REALITY (8-10)

And that brings to verses 8-10, a relationship with reality. Here is the basis by which we become children of God and brothers and sisters with one another. Here is the reason there is never to be any type of prejudice in the church. We may have earthly degrees, awards, money, and prestige, but all those don't mean a thing in God's family. Look at the first sentence in verse 8. If we think somehow we have no sin, or that our sin is somehow not as bad as other people's sins, then we are just fooling ourselves, and look at the last phrase in verse 10 ... and we call God a liar. If in any way we think we are better than someone else is, then we are deluded. If we are prejudiced in any way, then we are spitting in God's face.

The foundation for being in God's family and being a productive member of God's family is found in verse 9. We are to confess our sins to Him, and James adds, to one another. There is that word *confess*. God says that all sin disqualifies us from being in his family. Take a moment to look around you. There is no one here this morning that is cleaner, better, or more worthy than anyone else is. We are all here this morning by God's grace and if we are Christians, it is only because we understand the reality that we are all equally unworthy and undeserving to be adopted by God.

The only acceptable way to live in God's family is to confess that there is only One God Who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We must confess that we are unworthy to be called His children. That on our own, we were all headed for, and deserve to spend, an eternity in Hell. It is only by accepting the finished work of Jesus that we can enter God's family, be forgiven of our sins, and receive eternal life. And because God has become our Father, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to accept and love one another. **IF WE WANT TO ENTER GOD'S FAMILY AND REMAIN IN GOOD STANDING, WE MUST LEARN TO ACCEPT GOD'S WAY OF LIVING.**

## II. LIVING WITH LOVE TOWARDS GOD (2:1-6)

*Jesus Said The Most Fundamental Way Of Being For Us Is To Love God With All Our Heart, With All Our Soul, With All Our Mind, And With All Our Strength.*

The first pillar of the foundation of fellowship is to agree with God about life. Since fellowship with one another is dependent on the overflow of love between God and us, the second pillar of the foundation of fellowship is described in chapter 2 verses 1-6 as living with love towards God. **JESUS SAID THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL WAY OF BEING FOR US IS TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART, WITH ALL OUR SOUL, WITH ALL OUR MIND, AND WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH.** We discussed a lot of this last week when we focused on worship but we will review it quickly here.

### A. GOD'S ACT OF LOVE (1-2)

In verses 1-2, God's act of love is revisited. God created us holy, good, and perfect. But because we all have a natural bent towards sin, and because we all sin, we find ourselves separated from God. But Jesus came to die for our sins. As we place our faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus, God forgives us our sins and gives us eternal life. Please don't miss the last sentence in verse 2 because in our self-centeredness we forget that Jesus wants everybody to be saved. As individuals and as a church, it is our responsibility to spread this message that Jesus died so that everybody can enter God's family if they are willing to submit to God's plan of salvation by placing their faith and trust in Jesus.

### B. OUR ACT OF LOVE (3-6)

Verses 3-6 describe our act of love. If you stop and think, how could I possibly show my love for God? I can buy my wife flowers or jewelry. I can help her clean the house. But God has everything. The Bible makes it clear that the way we demonstrate our love for God is by obeying Him. Let me give you an example. Let's say my wife and I had an argument. You know that would never happen in my house because I'm so kind, gentle, and patient. She really is a lucky woman. Let's just *say* that my wife and I had an argument. It's time for me to leave for work. Since I'm mad, I just walk out the door, but I hear God to say to me, "If you really love me, you'll go back and make things right." You see the issue is no longer between my wife and me. It's between me and God. If I really love God, I'll obey Him. I demonstrate my love for God by going back and making things right with my wife. Are there people that you need to forgive? Are there people that you are prejudiced against? Are you ignoring people? The fact is that there is only one way to love God, and that is to obey Him.

Again, John lays it out pretty clearly in these verses. If we call ourselves Christians and if we say we love God, but are not obeying Him, then we are liars. On the other hand, if we want to truly love God, we must live our lives as Jesus did. We demonstrate our love for God by obeying His will for us as described in the Bible. **JESUS SAID THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL WAY OF BEING FOR US IS TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART, WITH ALL OUR SOUL, WITH ALL OUR MIND, AND WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH.**

## III. LIVING WITH LOVE TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER (7-11)

*Jesus Said Our Love For God Further Expresses Itself In Loving One Another As God Loves Each One Of Us.*

The first pillar of the foundation of fellowship is **submitting to God's word**. The second pillar is a **passionate overflowing love relationship with God**. The third pillar of the foundation of fellowship is described in verses 7-11, **living with love towards one another**. **JESUS SAID OUR LOVE FOR GOD FURTHER EXPRESSES ITSELF IN LOVING ONE ANOTHER AS GOD LOVES EACH ONE OF US.** Have you been noticing another connection in this passage? God has given us commandments to live by. We must accept and submit to these commands. That's confession. We demonstrate our love for God by obeying these commands. Now John focuses on one particular command, we are to love one another.

### A. GOD'S COMMAND TO LOVE (7-8)

Verses 7-8 express God's command to love. John says that he is restating an old commandment with a new twist on it. The command to love others as we love ourselves has been stated and restated throughout the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. However, Jesus cranked it up a notch. Jesus said, <sup>12</sup>*My command is this: Love each other as I*

have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" John 15:12-13(NIV). Now, death is involved. We can fudge a lot on the command that says to love one another as we love ourselves. However, there is no fudge room here. We are to love one another to death. We are to die to ego. We are to die to self-centeredness, self-indulgence, and self-absorption. This is a very powerful type of love. Jesus died so that we could be a family. He told us that this kind of self-sacrificing love should result in us feeding one another, clothing one another, visiting one another and caring for one another. The wisdom writers who wrote and compiled the Proverbs talked a lot about this family living. God has commanded us to love one another.

### **B. A REFUSAL TO LOVE (9 & 11)**

But it almost seems that most of us seem to just pick and choose which parts of the Bible we obey. Verse 9 and verse 11 describe a refusal to love. Here is what I want us to really get hold of. If we refuse to love each other, for whatever reason, we are refusing to love God. I'm sure we can all find reasons not to love Christian brothers and sisters. We all have what we think are good reasons not to forgive others. We can all find excuses not to help others that are in financial, physical, spiritual, or emotional need. We can say things like, "That person really hurt me. I can't forgive them. I don't like that person. We really don't click. I'd like to help people with money, but I'm a little tight myself right now."

Keep in mind that Jesus cranked up love a notch to make His type of love sacrificial. We are to go out of our way to forgive one another and minister to one another.

Let's take these two verses phrase by phrase. Look at verse 9. *"If anyone says, 'I am living in the light' but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is still living in darkness."* Keep in mind, ignoring someone, refusing to forgive them, being prejudiced against them, is the same as hating them. If we cannot forgive one another, if we are not caring for others, then there is no reason to think we are Christians. John says that if we do not actively love one another, then we don't love God.

In verse 11, John kicks up the argument a notch. He says, *"Anyone who hates a Christian brother or sister is living and walking in darkness. Such a person is lost, having been blinded by the darkness."*

Now I'm going to use the pronoun "you", because it has more personal force, but I am also challenging myself with this as well. Are you prejudiced against any race, nationality, or culture? If you are, then it seems to me that John is saying you are lost and your salvation is really in question. Are you unwilling to truly and totally forgive someone? If so, then you may be lost and not saved. Are you willing to help anyone in need here? Not just helping people in your own clique or group. Non Christians do that. We must be willing to help everyone here as Christian brothers and sisters. If we are not willing to get to know one another and get involved with one another, then there is no reason to think we belong to God's family. John is very clear here in verse 11. If we are not actively loving, forgiving, and caring for our Christian brothers and sisters here, then there is no reason to think we are Christians. We may think we're saved, but in reality still heading for hell. We may think we have been Christians for 50 years. But look around you. Are you willing to forgive everybody in this church family? Are you willing to help everyone here financially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually? Are you willing to let go of all your prejudices towards your Christian brothers and sisters here? If the answer to any of those questions is no, then you may not be a Christian.

### **C. A DESIRE TO LOVE (10)**

On the other hand, verse 10 describes a desire to love. If you answered yes to those questions, then you are truly walking in the light. The way we love God is to obey His commands and His second most important command is that we love one another as Jesus loved us. **JESUS SAID OUR LOVE FOR GOD FURTHER EXPRESSES ITSELF IN LOVING ONE ANOTHER AS GOD LOVES EACH ONE OF US.**

We defined fellowship as being in relationships where we meet one another's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. If we submit ourselves to God and His commands, if we passionately love God, and let the overflow of that passionate love spill out onto those around us, we will automatically fellowship with one another. **SINCE WE ALL BECAME PART OF GOD'S FAMILY BECAUSE OF GOD'S LOVE, WE ARE TO CONTINUE IN THIS FAMILY, LIVING IN LOVE TOWARDS GOD AND ONE ANOTHER.**

## IV. EPILOGUE

There are many things that hold us back from being good brothers and sisters to one another: fear, indifference, self-centeredness and greed. Richard Foster in his book, *Prayers From The Heart* offers this prayer that helps us be better family members.

*"BY THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST  
I resist all evil powers seeking sway within me.  
I stand against the fear that makes me want to manage and control others.  
Grant me the gift of faith, O Lord, to overcome my fear.  
I stand against the greed that makes me use others for my own selfish purposes.  
Grant me a spirit of generosity, O Lord, to temper my greed.  
I stand against the pride that drives me to seek inordinate attention.  
Grant me the grace of service, O Lord to conquer my pride.  
May faith, hope, and love have increasing sway over every thought and action.*

*Amen"*

We are going to celebrate two sacraments that illustrate what we have been talking about this morning. Both have to do with the foundations of fellowship and center around the family. Baptism is a public ceremony that publicly acknowledges that a person has officially become part of God's family. This morning we are going to welcome Paris to the family of faith. We have a new sister. She has many new brothers and sisters. Baptism is an adoption ceremony.

Communion is a meal that we share together. It is to remind us that we are a family. God is our Father and we are brothers and sisters.

Let's start with communion. Communion is to remind us that we all entered God's family the same way. We were all headed for hell and there is nothing good in any of us apart from God. We were saved by the selfless act of Jesus Christ and we are called to sacrificially love one another.

The church at Corinth was all screwed up. They all claimed to be super Christians who loved God and they had many spiritual gifts, yet they were selfish and self-centered. Listen carefully to Paul's warning to them and take it to heart.

<sup>17</sup>*But now when I mention this next issue, I cannot praise you. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together. <sup>18</sup>First of all, I hear that there are divisions among you when you meet as a church, and to some extent I believe it. <sup>19</sup>But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that those of you who are right will be recognized!*

<sup>20</sup>*It's not the Lord's Supper you are concerned about when you come together. <sup>21</sup>For I am told that some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk. <sup>22</sup>What? Is this really true? Don't you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace the church of God and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say about these things? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly do not!*

<sup>23</sup>*For this is what the Lord himself said, and I pass it on to you just as I received it. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took a loaf of bread, <sup>24</sup>and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup>In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and you, sealed by the shedding of my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it." <sup>26</sup>For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.*

<sup>27</sup>*So if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, that person is guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup>That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking from the cup. <sup>29</sup>For if you eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily, not honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. <sup>30</sup>That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.*

<sup>31</sup>*But if we examine ourselves, we will not be examined by God and judged in this way. <sup>32</sup>But when we are judged and disciplined by the Lord, we will not be condemned with the world. <sup>33</sup>So, dear brothers and sisters, when you gather for the Lord's Supper, wait for each other. <sup>34</sup>If you are really hungry, eat at home so you won't bring judgment upon yourselves when you meet together.*

*I'll give you instructions about the other matters after I arrive" I Corinthians 11:17-34 (NIV)*

In Baptism, when Paris goes under the water, she is saying that she is dying to death. She is no longer separated from God. She is now choosing to leave the world and selfish behavior behind.

When she comes up out of the water, she is now declaring that she is spiritually alive and now belongs to God's family -- with all its rights, privileges, and responsibilities.