

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP AS A REQUIREMENT FOR FULLNESS JOY

By

Michael T. Poirier

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Christian Bible College • 106 Zebulon Court • PO Box 8968
Rocky Mount, NC 27804-6968 Phone: (252) 451-1031

CHRISTIAN BIBLE COLLEGE

ABSTRACT

Everyone seeks a joy-filled life. Believers and non-believers alike do not wake up in the morning and declare I want to have a miserable day. Even our sinful nature inherently craves something greaterⁱ that cannot be fulfilled by our own volition. The Bible lays out the route to a joy-filled life and nowhere is that more evident than in the opening verses of the Apostle John's first Epistle.

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Unless otherwise noted all scripture quoted is from the King James Bible which is Public Domain and not referenced if quoted directly.

GLOSSARY

Each of the following definitions, unless otherwise noted, can be found in the (1) International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)ⁱⁱ, or when an exact Biblical definition is not available the (2) Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary (with updates 1844 and 1913).ⁱⁱⁱ

Addict: (1) a-dikt': Found only in the King James Version of 1 Cor 16:15, for Greek tasso. The house of Stephanus is said to be "addicted to the ministry of the saints," i.e. they have so "arranged" their affairs as to make of this service a prime object; the Revised Version (British and American) "set themselves to minister."

Addiction: (2) 1. *The act of devoting or giving up in practice; the state of being devoted. - His addiction was to courses vain.*

2. *Among the Romans, a making over goods to another by sale or legal sentence; also an assignment of debtors in service in their creditors.*

Charity: (1) see [Charity - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

(2) 1. *In a general sense, love, benevolence, good will; that disposition of heart which inclines men to think favorably of their fellow men to think favorably of their fellow men, and to do them good. In a theological sense, it includes supreme love to God, and universal good will to men. 1 Cor. 8. Col. 3. 1 Tim 1.* ^{iv}

2. *In a more particular sense, love, kindness, affection, tenderness, springing from natural relations; as the charities of father, son, and brother.*

Christian: (1) See [Christian - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

(2) n. 1. *A believer in the religion of Christ.*

2. *A professor of his belief in the religion of Christ.*

3. *A real disciple of Christ; one who believes in the truth of the Christian religion, and studies to follow the example, and obey the precepts, of Christ; a believer in Christ who is characterized by real piety.*

4. *In a general sense, the word Christians includes all who are born in a Christian country or of Christian parents.*

CHRISTIAN, v.t. *To baptize.*

Communion: (1) ko-mun'-yun: The terms "communion" and "fellowship" of the English Bible are varying translations of the words koinonia, and koinoneo, or their cognates. They designate acts of fellowship observed among the early Christians or express the unique sense of unity and fellowship of which these acts were the outward expression. The several passages in which these terms are used fall into two groups: those in which they refer to acts of fellowship, and those in which they refer to fellowship as experienced... [Communion; \(Fellowship\) - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

(2) n. 1. Fellowship; intercourse between two persons or more; interchange of transactions, or offices; a state of giving and receiving; agreement; concord. - We are naturally led to seek communion and fellowship with other. - What communion hath light with darkness? 2 Cor. 6.^v

2. Mutual intercourse or union in religious worship, or in doctrine and discipline.

5. Union of professing Christians in a particular church; as, members in full communion.

Exegesis: ek-se-je'-sis. ⇒ [See also the McClintock and Strong Biblical Cyclopedia.](#)
See [INTERPRETATION](#).

Fellowship: n. for this document: the intimately familiar sharing of biblical truths with God and like-minded believers

(1) ⇒ [See a list of verses on FELLOWSHIP in the Bible.](#)

See COMMUNION.

⇒ [See the definition of fellowship in the KJV Dictionary](#)

⇒ [See also the McClintock and Strong Biblical Cyclopedia.](#)

(2) 1. Companionship; society; consort; mutual association of persons on equal and friendly terms; familiar intercourse.

Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Eph. 5.

Men are made for society and mutual fellowship.

2. Association; confederacy; combination. - Most of the other christian princes were drawn into the fellowship of that war. [Unusual.]

3. Partnership; joint interest; as fellowship in pain.

4. Company; a state of being together. - The great contention of the sea and skies parted our fellowship.

5. *Frequency of intercourse.* - *In great town friends are scattered, so that there is not that fellowship which is in less neighborhoods.*

6. *Fitness and fondness for festive entertainments; with good prefixed.* - *He had by his good fellowship - made himself popular, with all the officers of the army.*

7. *Communion; intimate familiarity.* 1John 1.

8. *In arithmetic, the rule of proportions, by which the accounts of partners in business are adjusted, so that each partner may have a share of gain or sustain a share of loss, in proportion to his part of the stock.*

9. *An establishment in colleges, for the maintenance of a fellow.*

Friendship: *n. friend, friend'-ship: In the Old Testament two words, variously translated "friend" or "companion": re`eh, indicating a mere associate, passing friend, neighbor, or companion; 'ahabh, indicating affection natural or unnatural. In the New Testament also two words: hetairos, "a comrade," or "fellow," and philos, suggesting a more affectionate relation....*

[Friend; Friendship - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

Full, Fullness: *n.- The translation of pleroma, which is generally, but not invariably, rendered "fullness" in the New Testament. Etymologically, pleroma--which itself is derived from the verb pleroo, "I fill"--signifies "that which is or has been filled"; it also means "that which fills or with which a thing is filled"; then it signifies "fullness," "a fulfilling.*

Gospel: *(1) gos'-pel (to euaggelion): The word gospel is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word which meant "the story concerning God." In the New Testament the Greek word euaggelion, means "good news." It proclaims tidings of deliverance. The word sometimes stands for the record of the life of our Lord (Mr 1:1), embracing all His teachings, as in Ac 20:24. But the word "gospel" now has a peculiar use, and describes primarily the message which Christianity announces. "Good news" is its significance. It means a gift from God. It is the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins and sonship with God restored through Christ. It means remission of sins and reconciliation with God. The gospel is not only a message of salvation, but also the instrument through which the Holy Spirit works (Ro 1:16).*

Hermeneutics: *(1) hur-me-nu'-tiks. ⇒[See also the McClintock and Strong Biblical Cyclopedia.](#)*

See [INTERPRETATION.](#)

(2) n. *The art of finding the meaning of an author's words and phrases, and of explaining it to others. Biblical Hermeneutics is the study of methods and principles for the interpretation of God's Holy Word. This can be a slippery slope as some are quick to opine what they have not fully studied forgetting the command of 2 Timothy 2:15.^{vi}*

Joy: (1) joi (simchah; chara): ⇒[Topical Bible outline for "Joy."](#)

The idea of joy is expressed in the Old Testament by a wealth of synonymous terms that cannot easily be differentiated. The commonest is simchah (1Sa 18:6, etc.), variously translated in English Versions of the Bible "joy," "gladness," "mirth"; from sameah, properly "to be bright," "to shine" (Pr 13:9, "The light of the righteous rejoiceth," literally, "is bright"), but generally used figuratively "to rejoice," "be glad" (Le 23:40 and very frequent).

⇒[See a list of verses on JOY in the Bible.](#)

Other nouns are masos and sason, both from sus, properly "to spring," "leap," hence, "exult," "rejoice"; rinnah, "shouting." "joy"; gil, from verb gil or gul, "to go in a circle," hence, "be excited" (dancing round for joy), "rejoice." In the New Testament, far the commonest are chara, "joy," chairō, "to rejoice" (compare charis, "grace"). But we have also agalliasis, which expresses "exuberant joy," "exultation" (not used in classical Greek, but often in the Septuagint; in the New Testament, Lu 1:14,44; Ac 2:46; Jude 1:24; Heb 1:9), and the corresponding verb agalliaō (-aomai), "to exult," "rejoice exceedingly" (Mt 5:12, etc.). In English Versions of the Bible we have sometimes "to joy" (now obsolete as a verb), used in an intransitive sense = "to rejoice" (Hab 3:18; 2Co 7:13, etc.).

(2) *n. - 1. The passion or emotion excited by the acquisition or expectation of good; that excitement of pleasurable feelings which is caused by success, good fortune, the gratification of desire or some good possessed, or by a rational prospect of possessing what we love or desire; gladness; exultation; the exhilaration of spirits.*

Joy is a delight of the mind, from the consideration of the present or assured approaching possession of a good.

Legalism: (2) *noun strict adherence, or the principle of strict adherence, to law or prescription, especially to the letter rather than the spirit. Theology. - the doctrine that salvation is gained through good works. The judging of conduct in terms of adherence to precise laws.*^{vii}

Liberty: lib'-er-ti (deror, rachabh; eleutheria): *The opposite of servitude or bondage, hence, applicable to captives or slaves set free from oppression (thus deror, Le 25:10; Isa 61:1, etc.). Morally, the power which enslaves is sin (Joh 8:34), and liberty consists, not simply in external freedom, or in possession of the formal power of choice, but in deliverance from the darkening of the mind, the tyranny of sinful lusts and the enthrallment of the will, induced by a morally corrupt state. In a positive respect, it consists in the possession of holiness, with the will and ability to do what is right and good. Such liberty is possible only in a renewed condition of soul, and cannot exist apart from godliness. Even under the Old Testament godly men could boast of a measure of such liberty (Ps 119:45, rachabh, "room," "breadth"), but it is the gospel of Christ which bestows it in its fullness, in giving a full and clear knowledge of God, discovering the way of forgiveness, supplying the highest motives to holiness and giving the Holy Spirit to destroy the power of sin and to quicken to righteousness. In implanting a new life in the soul, the gospel lifts the believer out of the sphere of*

external law, and gives him a sense of freedom in his new filial relation to God. Hence, the New Testament expressions about "the glorious liberty" of God's children (Ro 8:21 the King James Version; compare Ga 2:4; 5:13, etc.), about liberty as resulting from the possession of the Spirit (2Co 3:17), about "the perfect law of liberty" (Jas 1:25). The instrument through which this liberty is imparted is "the truth" (Joh 8:32). Christians are earnestly warned not to presume upon, or abuse their liberty in Christ (Ga 5:13; 1Pe 2:16).

⇒[See the definition of liberty in the KJV Dictionary](#)

⇒[See also the McClintock and Strong Biblical Cyclopedia.](#)

Suffering: A great variety of Hebrew and Greek expressions, too large to be here enumerated, have been translated by "suffering" and other forms derived from the same verb. The most obvious meanings of the word are the following: (1) The commonest meaning perhaps in the English Versions of the Bible is "to permit," "to allow," "to give leave to": "Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away" (Mr 10:4). (2) "To experience," "to go through," "to endure": "I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Mt 27:19). A woman "had suffered many things of many physicians" (Mr 5:26). Other common phrases are "to suffer affliction" (1Th 3:4; Heb 11:25, the Revised Version (British and American) "share ill-treatment"), "to suffer hardship" (2Ti 2:9), "to suffer adversity" (Heb 13:3 the King James Version, the Revised Version (British and American) "to be ill-treated"), "to suffer dishonor" (the King James Version "shame," Ac 5:41), "to suffer violence," (Mt 11:12), "to suffer wrong" (Ac 7:24), "to suffer terror" (Ps 88:15), "to suffer shipwreck" (2Co 11:25), "to suffer hunger" (Ps 34:10; Pr 19:15), "to suffer thirst" (Job 24:11). (3) "To put up with," "to tolerate": the King James Version, "For ye suffer fools gladly (the Revised Version (British and American) "ye bear with the foolish gladly"), seeing ye yourselves are wise" (2Co 11:1,9). (4) "To undergo punishment": "Think ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they have suffered these things?" (Lu 13:2). (5) "To sustain loss": "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss" (1Co 3:15; also Php 3:8). (6) "To suffer death." Here the clearest references are to the suffering or passion of Christ, which indeed includes the enduring of untold hardships and affliction, all of which culminate in His vicarious death for man (Mt 16:21; Mr 8:31; 9:12; Lu 9:22; 17:25; 22:15; 24:26,46; Ac 3:18; 17:3; 26:23; 1Pe 3:18).

Suffering belongs to the discipline of all Christ's followers (Ro 8:17; 2Co 1:7; Ga 3:4; Php 3:10; 1Th 2:2; 2Th 1:5; 2Ti 2:12; 3:12; Jas 5:10; 1Pe 2:20 f; 1Pe 3:14,17; 4:1,13,16; 5:10). Such suffering is called a suffering for God's or Christ's sake (Jer 15:15; Ac 9:16; Php 1:29; 2Ti 1:12). This fellowship in suffering unites us with the saints of God in all times (Jas 5:10), and is indeed a fellowship with the Lord Himself (Php 3:10), who uses this discipline to mold us more and more according to His character.

Thesis Definition: *Biblical Joy* is our proper response to circumstances with inner peace and contentment found only in fellowship with God and like-minded believers.

Theology: (1) the-ol'-o-ji. See [BIBLICAL THEOLOGY](#); [JOHANNINE THEOLOGY](#); [PAULINE THEOLOGY](#). ⇒[See also the McClintock and Strong Biblical Cyclopedia](#).

(2) THEOL'OGY, n. [Gr. God, and discourse.] Divinity; the science of God and divine things; or the science which teaches the existence, character and attributes of God, his laws and government, the doctrines we are to believe, and the duties we are to practice. Theology consists of two branches, natural and revealed. Natural theology is the knowledge we have of God from his works, by the light of nature and reason. Revealed theology is that which is to be learned only from revelation.

Moral theology teaches us the divine laws relating to our manners and actions, that is, our moral duties. theology, teaches or explains the doctrines of religion, as objects of faith.

Scholastic theology is that which proceeds by reasoning, or which derives the knowledge of several divine things from certain established principles of faith.

Triune: (2) a. [L. tres and unus.] Three in one; an epithet applied to God, to express the unity of the Godhead in a trinity of persons.

Unity: u'-ni-ti: Ps 133:1 for (yachadh, "unitedness," and Eph 4:3, [13](#) for henotes "oneness." Also Sirach 25:1 the King James Version for homonoia "concord" (so the Revised Version (British and American)). ⇒[See the definition of unity in the KJV Dictionary](#), ⇒[See also the McClintock and Strong Biblical Cyclopedia](#).

(2) 1. The state of being one; oneness. Unity may consist of a simple substance or existing being, as the soul; but usually it consists in a close junction of particles or parts, constituting a body detached from other bodies. Unity is a thing undivided itself, but separate from ever other thing...

4. In christian theology, oneness of sentiment, affection, or behavior. How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Ps. 133^{viii}

Unity of faith is an equal belief of the same truths of God, and possession of the grace of faith in like form and degree.

Unity of spirit is the oneness which subsists between Christ and his saints, by which the same spirit dwells in both, and both have the same disposition and aims; and it is the oneness of Christians among themselves, united under the same head, having the same spirit dwelling in them, and possessing the same graces, faith, love, hope.

Preface

In March 2010 I began teaching a series on Fellowship at my local church using the epistles of John as the basis for the exposition. On the second Sunday, we began by looking at the introduction of 1st John verses 1-4. I proposed that John clearly states the reason for his writing this epistle was so that the reader's joy might be full.^{ix} This led to a lengthy discussion on what was this "fullness of Joy" and how one obtains it. Again, I put forth that the "fellowship" referred to in verse three^x was the only way to obtain this and that only believers can have the fullness of joy.

I began a systematic exegesis study of First John. Determined to be careful and ensure proper biblical hermeneutics I used; contextual, historical, lexical, and theological analysis to develop the teaching and this thesis.

The main purpose was to prove my theory that true Christian fellowship can only be between fellow believers and between believers and God. That, that Fellowship is the basis for joy in a believer's life.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

BELIEFS

Before we proceed, it is always prudent from my perspective to ensure that the reader or person engaged in the discussion understands the beliefs or for the Christian, Biblical Worldview of the person(s), they are reading. Everything I write is based upon a set of rules that I hold to be the unwavering truth.^I While it is possible to have Christian fellowship with those who hold very minor differences in these truths, it is impossible,^{II} to do so with those who are opposed to them.

THERE IS ONE TRUE GOD IN THE FORM OF THREE PERSON'S FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT Co-equal in deity, power, and sovereignty Gen 1:1; Matt 3:16-18

THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD Verbally inspired every word without exception by the Holy Spirit Is 40:8; 2 Tim 3:16

SALVATION IS ETERNAL THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS ALONE It is only by the Grace of God that we are called to Faith through the conviction of the Holy Spirit Deut.10:14 – Deut.10:15; Matt.24:22 – Matt.24:24; Matt.24:31 – Matt.24:31; John.6:37 – John.6:39; Rom.8:28 – Rom.8:33; Rom.9:11 – Rom.9:13, 16; Ephesians 2:8-9

THE HOLY SPIRIT INDWELLS ALL BORN-AGAIN BELIEVERS Gen 41:38; Rom 8:9-14

HEAVEN AND HELL ARE LITERAL (REAL) PLACES RESERVED FOR ETERNITY FOR THE SAVED AND DAMNED Deut. 26:15; Matt 25:41

BELIEVERS ARE COMMANDED TO AND OBLIGATED TO WITNESS/SHARE THE GOSPEL Is 6:1-8; Matt 28:18-20

THERE IS ONE CHURCH, WITH CHRIST AS THE HEAD, WITH BORN AGAIN BELIEVERS AS THE BODY AND THE COMMAND TO FELLOWSHIP THEREIN 2 Chron 5: 1-6; Heb 10:25

PRAYER IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD OUR GROWTH IN FAITH AND THE DUTY OF BELIEVERS ON BEHALF OF OTHERS Is 55:6; Matt 7:7 – 1 Sam 12:23; 1 Tim 2:1

AS CITIZENS WE ARE TO RENDER UNTO CAESAR THAT WHICH IS HIS, WHILE ALWAYS BEING OBEDIENT TO GOD FIRST. Matthew 22:21, Mark 12:17, Luke 20:25; Proverbs 31:9, Jeremiah 11:3, Acts 5:29

SCRIPTURE

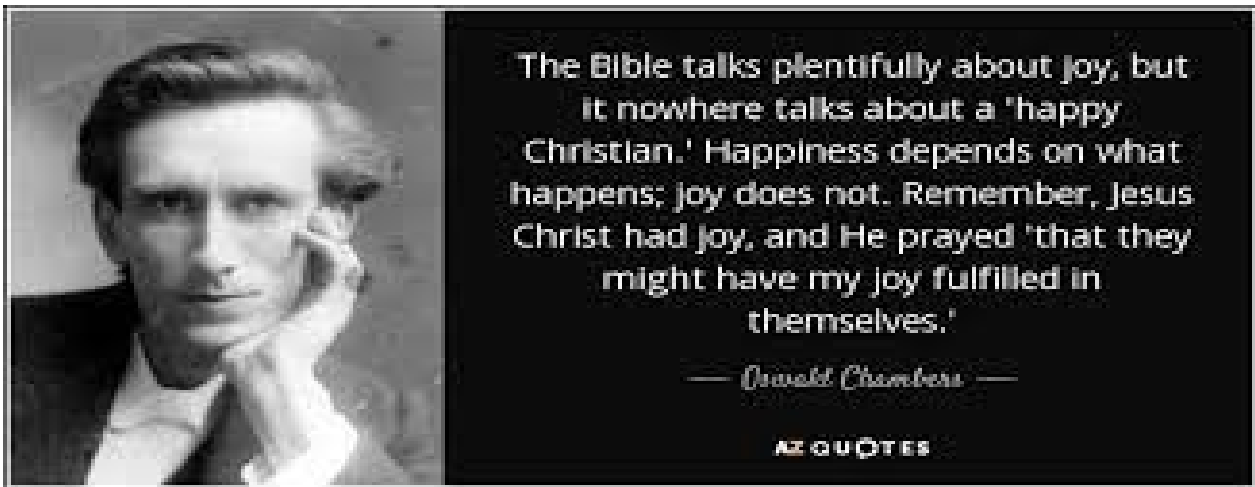
1 John 1:1-4

1 *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.*

2 *(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)*

3 *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

4 *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*



John starts this Epistle with the news: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard.* He is emphatic in this statement that this is nothing new in what he is writing. That it has been around from the beginning. That he and others had been first-hand witnesses to it.

In the very next verse (v.3) John states what, of the matter. What is it that has been around from the beginning? What is it that he has witnessed? What is it that he must pass on? It is nothing less than the remarkable gift of Christian Fellowship: *declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

As much as, *what* in any discussion is important the *why* is equally important. The Holy Spirit through John does not disappoint for verse 4 tells us that the reason is, the why is, so *that your joy may be full*. What a marvelous thoughtful God we serve, He wants us to be joyful; elated, ecstatic, glad, happy, jubilant, pleased, thrilled and I am sure more adjectives could be used.

How many “Christians” hold to the belief that they can and will only find joy when they reach glory? That only when they are walking on the streets were paved with gold^{III}, where tears and sorrow^{IV} are a thing of the past, will they be happy with exceeding joyful. Yet here the scripture was saying, in the here and now I could be that way. The fundamental ingredient for this to occur was *Fellowship*.

EXEGESIS

These verses of 1 John constitute the most difficult and confusing Greek of all John's writings in terms of structure.^V One can read dozens of commentaries and they all have varying differences in interpretation. C. H. Dodd, for example, expressed an opinion echoed by virtually everyone who has attempted to translate the prologue into English: "*The sentence is not good Greek, and it is only by paraphrase that it can be rendered into good English.*"^{VI} Alford's Greek Testament Critical Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 1^{VII}, offers us some good insight into these difficulties without being overly difficult for the reader to understand.

As for the authorship and a general overview of the book, the reader may find the expertise put forth in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*^{VIII} quite helpful. Nicol's understanding of the issues and presentation again is insightful and easily understood. In his comments on Chapter 1:1-4 he makes this most interesting observation; quoting from Bunyan, preface to *The Jerusalem-Sinner Saved*: "*I have been vile myself, but have obtained mercy, and I would have my companions in sin partake of mercy too, and therefore I have writ this little book*" and quoting Samuel Rutherford; *In truth, however, ἡμῶν evinces a still more generous solicitude the very spirit of Jesus. As He could not be happy in Heaven without us, so the Apostle's joy was incomplete unless his readers shared it.*

John seems to be echoing the words of Christ previously written in John 15:11^{IX}, *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* Here choosing to use the term "made full" which as noted can be complicated to translate. Does this fullness begin at the time of Salvation, so it is permanent? Or does it grow as we mature (are sanctified) in our daily walk with the Lord?

Luther once said: *When faith daily increases, joy increases in proportion.* We are a work in progress, and will be until the day of our glorification with Christ.

The reason for John's writing depends much on what you read. Again difficult as 1st John is for many to understand, so too are the numerous views on the overall purpose or theme. However, he seems to make a definitive statement on the matter that we will look at it next.

THEOLOGY

1 John as a whole, has a myriad of theological themes Light vs. Darkness, Truth vs. Lies, Righteousness vs. Sin, Love of God vs. Love of the World, yet none are more important than that defined in 1 John 1:3-4 'that your fellowship with God and us (fellow saints) may bring you joy.' [paraphrased]. Everything else John writes is because of that statement, why should we care about *walking in the light*,^x so our fellowship will be joyful. Why live a righteous life, so our fellowship will be joyful. Why Love God and not the World, so our fellowship will be joyful. The point has been made we can see, all of John's sub-themes are because his main topic is Fellowship and Joy.

F.F. Bruce in his work on the Gospel and Epistles of John states:

Our theme is that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we beheld, and our hands handled. Our theme, in short concerns the Word of Life, the Life which was made manifest. Yes, we have seen, and we have bear witness; we make known to you Eternal Life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us. What we have seen and heard we make known to you also, in order that you in turn may have fellowship with us^{xI} ... v.3 -John desires his readers to have fellowship with himself and his associates by sharing their experiences of the manifested life; but fellowship with John and his associates meant at the same time fellowship with the Father and with the Son^{xII} ... v.4- John certainly sought his readers joy, but their joy would be his, and that joy would be filled brimful if they were firmly established in the Christian faith and fellowship.^{xIII}

What is the purpose of 1st John? So that you, me, they, all true believers may have the fullness of joy found only in fellowship with the Triune God and like-minded believers.

Chapter 2

DEFINING FELLOWSHIP

The first thing needed to understand Christian Fellowship is to define what it is.

The Greek word used is, Koinos^{XIV}, found ten times in the bible it appears in other forms as Koinoneo, Koinonos, and Koinonia found some fourteen, eight, fourteen, and nineteen times in the bible, respectively.

The common or root word is Koinos, meaning common, ordinary, belonging to generality.^{XV}

Two familiar examples of this can be in the book of Acts 2:44 where the believers of Jerusalem shared all things in *common* and Titus 1:4 where the Apostle Paul addresses Titus as “mine own son after the *common* faith.” Derivatives of the word have the more familiar meanings associated today with partaking and sharing of things in common. But this is not a new concept in the bible.

The world has its view of fellowship. According to Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary,^{XVI} it means: (a) companionship, company, associate (vb.); (b) the community of interest, activity, feeling or experience, i.e., a unified body of people of equal rank sharing in common interests, goals, and characteristics, etc.; (c) partnership, membership (an obsolete usage but an important one. It shows what has happened to our ideas of fellowship).


Three key ideas come out of this:

- (1) Fellowship means being a part of a group, a body of people. It opposes isolation, solitude, loneliness, and our present-day independent kind of individualism.
- (2) Fellowship means having or sharing with others certain things in common such as interest, goals, feelings, beliefs, activities, labor, privileges and responsibilities, experiences, and concerns.
- (3) Fellowship can mean a partnership that involves working together and caring for one another as a company of people, like a company of soldiers or members of a family.

Although one would think Christian Fellowship and worldly or non-Christian fellowship have much in common, in reviewing the “worldly: criteria we can agree that both types of fellowship 1) require being part of a group, 2) require like-minded people, and 3) requires working for a common goal. That is where the similarities end.

No group in the bible better illustrates that point than the Pharisees. The root Hebrew word has the meaning of separatist; they were a group set apart not for the common good but their ideals. Our Lord and Savior points this out to them in Matthew 3:7 “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Christ calls them vipers a deadly snake that no one would hold in common.

If you have ever been to an LSU Tigers football game with 90,000 + folks screaming and cheering for the home team you would think they had fellowship. Yet even in a crowd that size it is possible to lack true fellowship. It is important to note that fellowship, that is biblical fellowship, between God and believers and between believers themselves; can and is only brought about by the Grace of God alone. As the quote below demonstrates this understanding dates even from the early church Fathers:

A religious icon of Saint Augustine, a bearded man with a halo, wearing a blue and white robe, holding a book. The background is gold with some text in Greek and Latin.

Saint Augustine

Oh, God, to know you is life. To serve You is freedom. To praise you is the soul's joy and delight. Guard me with the power of Your grace here and in all places. Now and at all times, forever. Amen.

AZ QUOTES

As far back as Adam, it was God's grace that allowed communion or fellowship with God. After the fall God could have destroyed Adam and Eve, they deserved nothing less. But God's character shown through and His grace (Genesis 3-8-21) allowed them to live. We see a further example of this in Noah v.6:8, Lot v.19:19, Without God in the equation one cannot and will not have fellowship. It is the presence of God in our lives, our very being that separates or sets apart Christian Fellowship.

This is not to say that the "fellowship" found in all modern churches today is proper and true fellowship. The gathering around the coffee and donuts before worship service or even the worship service itself; has become the norm of fellowship. But true fellowship is much more. It is a completeness that is nowhere else, Jesus speaking in John 17:33 says: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." The symbiotic (God/Man) relationship of father and son extends to the Son and true believers and amongst true believers engrafted into the family of God.

For this document, we will define fellowship as, ***the intimately familiar sharing of biblical truths with God and like believers***. Again, it cannot be emphasized enough that God, The Word, and the Holy Spirit are essential for a believer to have fellowship. Leave God out and you may have a friendship but never biblical fellowship.

Most Christians have read or at least heard 2 Corinthians 6:14, where Paul tells the Church at Corinth to *not be unequally yoked to non-believers*. This is not a new concept, Psalm 94:19-21 reminds us; "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul. ²⁰ Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? ²¹ They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. Even centuries ago folks were concerned about the influences of non-believers."

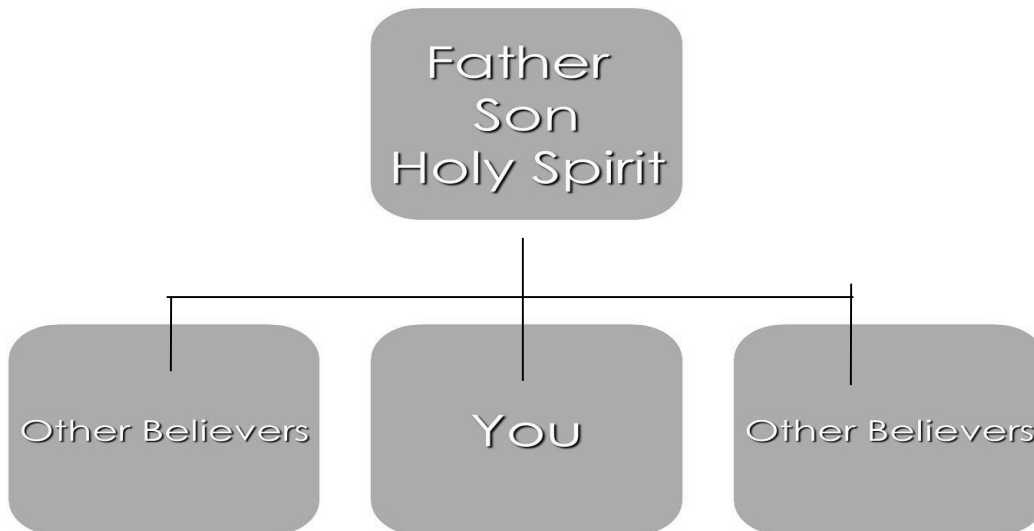
This is not a condemnation to separate from all things "worldly." It is doubtful many "Christians" today are willing to separate themselves from their vehicles, cell phones or computers, all worldly things. Of course this is not what Paul is speaking of. No this is a warning from Paul to not adjoin ourselves in such a manner that we allow the influence of the world to overtake our Spiritual lives.

When we look at Galatians 5:16-17 *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,* he may have had 2 Corinthians 6:14 in mind. He was thinking of what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane.^{XVII} The apostles with Jesus knew their duty to stay awake and pray and although the Spirit was willing the flesh was weak and so they slept. The more we associate closely with the world the weaker the Spirit.

PURPOSE OF FELLOWSHIP

Now that we have defined Fellowship why do we need it? What is the importance and meaning of it in our lives? Certainly, The Holy Spirit did not inspire the Apostle John to write three letters on the subject just because He could.

The initial four verses of John's first letter give us much insight into Fellowship. First, this is nothing new "that which was from the beginning" it is the same declarations Jesus made and the prophets before Him. That Christ's very life was a demonstration of the need for fellowship. Jesus was in constant communion (same word in Greek) as fellowship with His father. That fellowship is called vertical, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, before it is lateral that is between believers.



Now there are benefits and reasons for having biblical fellowship with God and fellow believers. Here I will list just a few:

1. **Corporate Prayer** – Most evangelical churches participate in corporate (group) prayer. The model of this can be found in the first New Testament church Acts 2:42.
2. **Cooperative Worship** – Paul in Romans 11:36 reminds us that "To him be glory forever. Amen." In other words, God alone is worthy of Worship and Praise. Yes, we can and should do this

on our own, but nothing matches the majesty of a full congregation singing and praising our Lord and Savior.

3. It completes the picture of God for us – As noted earlier (pg.4) Jesus made it clear that when we become one with Him and the triune God, John 17:33 *we are brought out of the darkness and into the light*. We see God for who He is in all His Glory.

4. It makes us stronger – One of the most misused verses in the Bible is Philippians 4:13. Certainly, Paul is making the case that we are stronger with Christ, that we can endure the trials and woes of worldly suffering. What he is not saying is that we as Christians can do anything because Christ is in us.

5. It encourages us – Christians can easily be discouraged by the events and happenings around us in today's world. One of the very reasons for God leaving us His Holy Word than as a means of encouragement to believers. We also can find encouragement in the fact that fellowship with Christ means the victory is already won John 16:33, and that should be an example we can share with others 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

In the introduction of John's letter, we find the ultimate purpose of fellowship. We are to have it so "that your joy {my joy, our joy} may be full." The ESV renders it as "may be complete." Most everyone likes being full, they want all the benefits of being a believer they can get. In the evil and chaotic modern world of the 21st century, they can use all the "joy" available. Having a full tank of it is the only way to go.

Of course, this is supported by other scripture, Psalm 16:11 states "in thy presence is fullness of life". In a time of repentance sorrow, David in Psalm 51:12 cries out "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation". John in his Gospel records Christ's words in Chapter 15 about the relationship between the believer and Christ. He culminates this with verse eleven with "*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*"

It is prudent here to state some things that should be obvious to most believers. When the bible speaks of joy, it is not always that feeling of exhilaration, gladness, gaiety, or even happiness that

most associate with the word. In this case, it refers solely to the cause of joy or happiness.^{xviii} All one must do today is to look at all the destructive ways men and women turn to try to obtain happiness and joy. Alcohol, drugs, gambling, and sexual perversion are rampant all in the name of feeling better. People think they can solve their dilemma but fail miserably at it.

While there is no comprehensive data on the prevalence of addictions, academic studies and government reports suggest addiction epidemics in many areas, including the following^{xix} (with prevalence estimates cited by Sussman, 2017, Table 6.1 and Table 7.1):

Marijuana: 7% of 18-year-olds, 2% of 50-year-olds;
Illicit drugs, non-marijuana: 8% of 18-year-olds, 5% of 50-year-olds
Tobacco: 15% of US adult population
Alcohol: 10% for older teenagers and adults
Food addiction: 10% of US adult population (= 25% of obese population)
Gambling: 1-3% of US adult population
Internet: 2% of US adult population
Exercise: 3-5% of US adult population (22-26% of college youth)
Workaholism: 10% of US adult population
Shopping addiction: 6% of US adult population
Love and sex addiction: 3-6% of the adult population

The maximum fullness of joy we can ever hope to achieve in this life and the eternal life thereafter is not found in monetary gain, worldly possessions or positions, or even the love of a wife (or husband). No, the uttermost joy we can obtain is found only in God through Christ Jesus.

We are warned, by Christ Jesus Himself, never to put our hopes, trust expectations in worldly offerings for they will only disappoint. No, the true believer is to focus on heavenly things: Matthew 6:19-21, *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: ²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*

It is the intimate bond of fellowship that God has with each of his children and the same bond that exists between believers that give us access to the happiness and joy the world seeks but can never attain without Christ.

EXAMPLES OF FELLOWSHIP

There are many examples of the word fellowship that can be found throughout the bible. Starting in the Old Testament we find in *Leviticus 6:2* *If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the LORD, and lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered him to keep, or in **fellowship**, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour;* In this instance, the Hebrew word used is *Tesuwmeth* meaning to pledge or deposit. Here we see fellowship has the meaning of something promised without surety. Something that is delivered without a contract because you know the person to whom it is delivered is just like you. He will keep his word, his pledge, and keep whatever is entrusted to him secure. Christian fellowship between believers and between believers and God should be that way. We must have hope that whatever we entrust to fellow believers they will not abuse. We trust God is inerrant and will always do what is best for us. Can we say the same for the world today?

We see in Psalm 94:20 the Hebrew word *rbx* transliterated Chabar; *shall the throne of iniquity have **fellowship** with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?* The context here is more like unto the Greek. The word here means to unite, join, bind together, be joined, be coupled, be in league, heap up, or have fellowship with.^{XX} At the beginning of this Psalm, we read how foolish it is for those who would persecute God's children and end with encouragement for believers. Our subject verse makes a declarative statement that those who honor the "throne of iniquity" shall have no fellowship with God.

In the New Testament, we first see this word used in Acts 2:42,44^{XXI} where the believers of Jerusalem had *fellowship* with and shared all things in *common*. The Greek word in verse 42 is *Koinonia*,^{XXII} which infers the sense of association, community, communion, joint participation, the share which one has in anything, participation. In verse forty-four we see "common" is the Greek word *Koinos* meaning ordinary, belonging to generality. The community of believers was able to share all things because their faith, their ideals were common to all present. We should be asking ourselves here how much we have in common with fellow believers and those who do not believe. If we have more in common with unbelievers, I suggest, there is a serious lack of biblical fellowship and therefore a lack of biblical joy in the believers' life.

Jerry Bridges in his book, True Fellowship^{xxiii} says, *But what of the matter of fellowship, Luke says they “devoted themselves to... to the fellowship.” They didn’t just have fellowship they devoted themselves to it! They gave it a priority in their lives along with prayer and hearing the word taught.* This is significant because one cannot expect to just “fall into” fellowship like any relationship it takes work.

The next use of the word is found in 1 Corinthians 1:9 *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the **fellowship** of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.* This verse is key to understanding how one obtains fellowship. Breaking down the verse we see it is God who is faithful, not man. Just as salvation is none of our doing^{xxiv} it is God who calls us unto fellowship; we would never choose it on our own. John Calvin's comments on this verse^{xxv} make this clear: *...Into the fellowship. Instead of this rendering Erasmus translates it into partnership The old interpreter renders it society I have preferred, however, to render it, fellowship, as bringing out better the force of the Greek word κοινωνιας For this is the design of the gospel, that Christ may become ours, and that we may be engrafted into his body. Now when the Father gives him to us in possession, he also communicates himself to us in him; and hence arises a participation in every benefit. Paul’s argument, then, is this — “Since you have, by means of the gospel which you have received by faith, been called into the fellowship of Christ, you have no reason to dread the danger of death, having been made partakers of him (Hebrews 3:14) who rose a conqueror over death.” In fine, when the Christian looks to himself, he finds only occasion for trembling, or rather for despair; but having been called into the fellowship of Christ, he ought, in so far as assurance of salvation is concerned, to think of himself no otherwise than as a member of Christ, so as to reckon all Christ’s benefits his own. Thus he will obtain an unwavering hope of final perseverance, (as it is called,) if he reckons himself a member of him who is beyond all hazard of falling away.*

The next two occurrences we will look at together; 1 Corinthians 10:20 *But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have **fellowship** with devils* and 2 Corinthians 6:14 *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what **fellowship** hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what **communion** hath light with darkness?*

We touched on this a little while defining Fellowship. While not a total prohibition against association with unbelievers, it would seem simple and clear that believers (to whom Paul was and John is writing) should not have fellowship with them. Paul states that righteousness (things that are good moral and upright by God's standards) cannot have things in common with unrighteousness (things that are found lacking before God). It is the old story of "good versus evil." Things of God (good) are completely opposite to things of the Devil (Evil). Yet this is oftentimes an exceedingly demanding thing to do especially for new believers.

The fact that the bible makes clear we are not to have *fellowship* with unbelievers does not mean that we cannot have friends who are unbelievers as some would have you believe. It is because a born-again believer has a higher (biblical) standard that guides his life, that now having fellowship with an unbeliever is impractical. They have only their standard by which to live and no understanding of Biblical matters. We can liken it to going to your trusted auto mechanic for a second opinion concerning brain surgery. Yes, an extreme example but not so when one considers John 3:19 which says: *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* John, It makes plain that we who live in the light of God should not and cannot have fellowship with those living in darkness (unbelievers) for their deeds are evil.

Having fellowship with those under church discipline is another issue that many of us have been unfortunate to witness firsthand at least once. One of the clearest documents on this subject is A Summary of Church Discipline^{xxvi} published in 1774. Under the heading of Excommunication, it reads: *Excommunication is a censure of the highest degree; it is a judicial act of the church in which, by the authority of Christ, she cuts off and entirely excludes an unworthy member from union and **communion** with the church, and from all the rights and privileges thereof. "It is a disfranchising from all the immunities of a **fellow-citizen** with the saints and taking from him a place and a name in the house of God" (Gill).* As hard as it may be to disassociate ourselves with someone you are used to having fellowship with it the command to do so is clear.^{xxvii} *The act of excommunication is expressed by various phrases; as by avoiding familiar conversation with such, Rom. 16:17, by not keeping company with them, 1 Cor. 5:9, Eph. 5:11, by not eating with them at*

the Lord's table, 1 Cor. 5:11 by purging out from the church the old leaven, 1 Cor. 5:7, by putting away the wicked from among them, 1 Cor. 5:13, by withdrawing from disorderly persons, and by cutting them off from fellowship with the saints, 2 Thess. 3:6, Gal. 5:12.

Types of Fellowship in the Bible

As noted earlier the English word Fellowship is derived from the Greek, *Koinonia*. It is used some 16-21 times in the Bible depending upon which translation you are using. The KJV references it 20 times with the following usages:^{XXVIII} fellowship 12, communion 4, communication 1, distribution 1, contribution 1, to communicate 1

Again it is sensible to look at a few of the types of fellowship found in the Bible. We will lay them out in no specific order:

Believers Fellowship: Acts 2:42, Galatians 2:9^{XXIX} - Since this is the general theme the only comment here is to point out the admonition against being a “Christian Loner.” George S. Barrett^{XXX} in his work on 1 John comments on the idea of solitude referring to these verses: *The isolated and solitary Christian can never be a happy Christian. A man might doubtless live the kind of life on a desert island, or in a hermit cave, but he could never live a happy or bleesed life in enforced solitude and isolation form his fellows.*

Communion Fellowship: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34^{XXXI} Eaton’s Bible Dictionary defines Communion as: *fellowship with God (Gen. 18:17–33; Ex. 33:9–11; Num. 12:7, 8), between Christ and his people (John 14:23), by the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1), of believers with one another (Eph. 4:1–6). The Lord’s Supper is so called (1 Cor. 10:16, 17), because in it there is fellowship between Christ and his disciples, and of the disciples with one another.*^{XXXII} Here we want to look at the last example. There may be no better example of what many demand fellowship to be, a relationship between man and Christ, than here at the supper table of our Savior. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11, makes it clear this is a act between true (repentant) believers and their LORD and SAVIOR. The supper table must be guarded against those whom would falsely partake for their sake. John Buyon, best known for Pilgrims Progres was a prolific writer, in his work COMMUNION AND FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIANS AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD^{XXXIII}, beginning on page 16 he offeres a lengthy but excellent reasoned approach to Communion of the Saints.

Gospel Fellowship: Philippians 1:3-5^{XXXIV} - This seems simplistic when first looked upon, especially to many new believers. After all the Gospel message found in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, Paul makes a clear and simple case. Yet the modern church has watered down the “Good News” so that we can no longer depend on hearing a Biblically true Gospel message preached in many pulpits. The issue is we make weak believers with weak fellowship. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is quoted on this matter, “If our Christianity has ceased to be serious about discipleship, if we have watered down the gospel into emotional uplift which makes no costly demands and which fails to distinguish between natural and Christian existence, then we cannot help regarding the cross as an ordinary everyday calamity, as one of the trials and tribulations of life. We have then forgotten that the cross means rejection and shame as well as suffering .”^{XXXV}

Fellowship with God the Father: 1 John 1:3, 1 John 3:1^{XXXVI}

Fellowship with the Holy Spirit: 2 Corinthians 13:14, Philippians 2:1-2^{XXXVII}

Fellowship with Christ: Matthew 12:48-50, John 15:4-5, Romans 7:4, 1 Corinthians 1:9^{XXXVIII}

Instead of commenting on each of the previous three annotations, one would think that Fellowship with the Triune God, can be addressed singularly or in plurality without diminishing the character or divine nature of any one person of the Godhead. The assumption is being made here, that all accept and interpret Genesis 1:26^{XXXIX} as proof of this.

Fellowship in Suffering: Matthew 16:24, Philippians 3:10, 1 Peter 4:13^{XL} - Why would anyone want to address the suffering, when the subject is the *fullness of joy in their [believers] life*. Because the two go hand in hand. If we look at 1 Corinthians 15:1–4 in references for Gospel Fellowship, we see Paul lays out three of the four aspects of Christ's Life. Christ died was buried and rose again. [Note the final aspect is His glorification] We as believers are to follow Christ's example, never thinking ourselves, as bondservants, above the master. Just as Christ we are not immune to the sufferings of this world. There is no magic wand, no special “prayer,” nothing that can intervene upon the will of God. If as Christ knew at Gethsemane, we must suffer let us suffer doing the will of

God. In 2 Corinthians 1:5, we find, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." You want joy, Christ can provide even in the hardest of times.

True Biblical Fellowship for Christians

Philip Melanchthon who was an associate of Martin Luther is often credited with what has become the normative explanation of the three main principles of biblical Christian fellowship in his famous quote: “In essentials, **unity**; in non-essentials, **liberty**; in all things, **charity**.” However recent evidence points to its origins from Marco Antonio de Dominis (d. 1624).^{XLII} What makes this interesting is he was twice declared a heretic, first from the Catholic church and later the reformed church. This seemingly makes it difficult to trust these words on unity. Nevertheless, this saying has become normative if not necessarily Biblically correct. Let us look at each of the aspects and how they can or if they should be applied today.

First “**Unity**” There is somewhere in the range of 170 million Americans claiming to be “Christians.” A post in one of our ministry blog posts,^{XLIII} *I do know that all denominations or people calling themselves “Christians” are true churches or children of God. What I do know or maybe better put is what I believe is that of the 170 MILLION claiming to be Christian in the USA, if only a remnant, are true Christians, that number is still a powerful force against all the evil we are currently seeing in America. Let us pray the remnant is effective.* Think on that for a moment, over and over we hear believers bemoan the evil of this world, only to watch them sit idle in the pew.

Richard Baxter (1615-1691) never advanced beyond local parish pastors to loom workers in Kidderminster. Still, he is considered one of the most influential English churchmen of the 1600s.^{XLIV} He was a peacemaker who sought unity among Protestants, and yet he was a highly independent thinker—and at the center of every major controversy in England during his lifetime.^{XLV} One of his most famous quotes is very appropriate here, *“I preached ... as a dying man to dying men.”* Baxter never thought himself greater than the lowly of sinners saved by grace.

Baxter wrote about unity as follows:^{XLVI}

1. *They have all but one God.*
2. *And one Head and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

3. *And one Sanctifier, the Holy Ghost.*
4. *And one ultimate end and hope, even the fruition of God in heaven.*
5. *And one Gospel to teach them the knowledge of Christ, and contain the promise of their salvation.*
6. *And one kind of faith that is wrought hereby.*
7. *And one and the same covenant (of which baptism is the seal) in which they are engaged to God.*
8. *And the same instrumental founders of our faith, under Jesus Christ, even the prophets and apostles.*
9. *And all members of the same universal body.*
10. *And all have the same new nature and holy disposition, and the same holy affections, in loving God and holiness, and hating sin.*
11. *They all own, as to the essential parts, the same law of God, as the rule of their faith and life, even the sacred canonical Scriptures.*
12. *Every member hath a love to the whole, and to each other, especially to the more excellent and useful members; and an inclination to holy communion with each other.*
13. *They have all a propensity to the same holy means and employment, as prayer, learning the Word of God, and doing good to others.*

In pondering this list, I think it essential to ask the following:

1. Is it accurate and faithful to Scripture – No doctrine of the Bible can stand alone on a single verse. Paul more than anyone in the New Testament spoke about the need to follow scripture. The

fact that *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, And we need to study to show ourselves approved workman...*^{XLVI} are just two examples of the need to be scripturally accurate and faithful whenever discussing Unity.

2. Is it Gospel-centered – One of the things Apologetics teaches is that *It is never about us and always about GOD!* So much of “modern worship” has become non-Gospel-centered, that is are putting their desire for getting a wonderful experience over that of worshipping God in Spirit and truth. This worshipping of idols (themselves) makes a mockery of the Gospel. As noted in the Gospel Fellowship under Examples of Fellowship in the Bible above, any watering down, any short-cuts in preaching or sharing the Gospel are sinful acts.

3. Is it theology sound – In its simplest form we can define Theology as the study of God and as it applies to us, the Christian Beliefs. Unlike number one above this one is a little more subjective. Subjective because there are some subjects NOT specifically mentioned in the Bible. For example, nowhere do we find LGBTQ mentioned in Holy Scripture, yet the word of God is certainly clear on what He (God) considers sin concerning this matter.

As modernism creeps into the church, we have so-called “Christian” churches calling for full inclusion and membership (even ordination) of these folks. Somehow, they are reading a different book than the one most of us purchased. Let’s clear we as “true believers” are always to hold fast to Ephesians 4:15 *But speaking the truth in love [in all things—both our speech and our lives expressing His truth], let us grow up in all things into Him [following His example] who is the Head—Christ.* Still, we need to, in Love speak the truth, and never be ashamed of it, Romans 1:26-27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10^{XLVII} are just two verses among all of scripture that we can point to that show the abomination this is to God.

4. Is it sensitive to history and historical theology - Those in favor of this Bad Theology usually point to three or four things all again subjective and not backed by scripture (or twisting of it) to make their case.

a. **Christians are to be fruit bearers** – If we do not agree with their opinion of scripture then we are not bearing good fruit and following Jesus's example (Matthew 7). The world will constantly mock us, use us, and even worse persecute us. Our response tells the world if we are a True Christian or not.

b. **Historically the church has not addressed sexual orientation** – Unless of course, you count the first-century church and much of Paul's writings. Then again other than that they are correct, and if the outing of the Catholic and some Protestant churches for sexual misconduct, in the past 20 years is any indication they should have done so long ago.

c. **Most scripture points to inclusion, not exclusion.** – Really, Jesus was the most Dogmatic person who ever walked the earth! John 14:6, Amplified Bible, *Jesus said to him, “[a]I am the [only] Way [to God] and the [real] Truth and the [real] Life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.* It does not get more exclusive than that.

We should be able to agree on the importance of Christian unity, but it should never come at the expense of the unfeigned Gospel.

What are the “non-essential” that we can have **liberty** in? Paul speaks on this in Romans 14. He mentions people who chose different diets, judging others against your standard, or which day(s) of the week need to be honored. Today the easiest example can be found in church worship services. Some churches (in my opinion) go too far in emotional energy and hyping up the congregation calling it worship. Others are so conservative that you would think you were at a funeral. The key here is if we can agree that both forms are Christ-centered, Christ-honoring, and Christ-glorifying, they can be deemed not worth fighting over.

The hot topic word lately is “Charity” as ***in all things, charity.*** Herein is the issue, not only is our unconditional love demanded by fellow Christians but the world too. Note the use of the term unconditional love. People today do not want the truth, they want what makes their ears itch,^{XLVIII} yet Jesus made it plain that a true disciple^{XLIX} knows, studies, and never compromises the Word. Again, it cannot be emphasized enough at least in this context, the harm we can cause by not

speaking with charity or love in all things. As an example, shortly after my conversion, my sister asked, ‘now that you are a Holy Roller, you think I am going to hell.’ Well, think I did not and blurted out YES! She did not speak to me for a year. It was the truth, it was not said to be mean, but it surely was not said in love. Both Paul and Peter implore us to season our conversations with salt^L

What Fellowship is Not

Most modern evangelical churches have an area or hall designated the “Fellowship Hall.” Yes, as crazy as it sounds, like an ignorant new believer I once asked if that were the only place on the church grounds that fellowship could occur? Again, Jerry Bridges^{LI} writes: *Yes, we modern-day Christians, just like those early believers from the day of Pentecost, are eager to devote ourselves to fellowship. There is only one problem: We have lost sight of the biblical meaning of fellowship. We devote ourselves to the wrong thing. Fellowship is not a location or designation; it is a relationship. Do not get me wrong I enjoy the Baptist spread like the next guy, but that is not true biblical fellowship.*

Fellowship is not the end-all for church folks. What is meant by that can be seen later in this epistle by John? In chapter two, John warns that many of the anti-Christ, that is those opposed to Christian morals and values will come from within the church: *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. ¹⁸Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. ¹⁹They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. John 2:15-19^{LII}.* This warning is ever-present today as more and more “seekers” are entering or dare I say infiltrating congregations and causing all sorts of issues. John goes on in verse 20^{LI} to say: *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* That we have the anointing of the Holy Spirit and are thereby able to call upon Him, the all-knowing Holy One to guide us in these relationships.

Fellowship is not Friendship, we touched on this briefly on page 6 while defining fellowship, but it deserves further examination. Although the two can be mutually inclusive, that is you can have friends that you have fellowship with, there can just as easily be the likelihood of friendship without fellowship. For example, you may have many neighbors with whom you are friendly, who mutually assist each other with projects, who attend the neighborhood association parties together, yet none

of them are believers, and therefore you have no fellowship with them. Remember we have defined fellowship as *the intimately familiar sharing of biblical truths with God and like believers*. There is no necessity of Biblical truths where friendships are concerned, This is however an absolute for biblical fellowship.

Chapter 3

BIBLICAL JOY

DEFINED

When we speak of Biblical Joy what is it exactly, we are speaking of? There are 25 Hebrew words and 10 Greek words that form over 150 references to joy in the Bible^{LIV}. No wonder it can be confusing to define with all these variations.

Is it that same thing the *Name it and Claim it* crowd believes that enough faith will grant all your wishes or desires? Far too often Biblical JOY is confused with earthly happiness, and they are not always the same. Let's be clear we can have (if God wills) both, but they are not co-dependent you can have Biblical Joy without earthly happiness.

So how can we define Biblical Joy, on page iv, I listed the dictionary answer but for this paper, a simplified definition is needed. Therefore, the following definition is proposed that **Biblical Joy is our proper response to circumstances (usually external) with inner peace and contentment found only in fellowship with God and like-minded believers.** We can have this joy because we have full confidence that God will use all circumstances in our lives for His glory, Romans 8:28.^{LV}

Easy, never, possible always. Many of us can remember clearly the first time we read through the bible and got to James 1:2 *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;* and thinking yeah, 'right y'all got no idea where I am right now.' A few years later and with much spiritual growth we usually come to appreciate that time of trouble. We must approach the day, whatever it contains with the same attitude of Paul, Philippians 2:13 *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

I have noticed modern evangelicals seem to think that God is here to serve them. The more spoiled we become, the more we demand instant satisfaction the more we demand of God. How arrogant, how unbiblical. His will, His good pleasure He is God, not you or me.

Keys to Biblical Joy

Joy just does not magically appear, nor as mentioned earlier, we cannot increase our faith and gain joy at the snap of our fingers. So how is Biblical Joy acquired? I propose it comes from the following ONLY:

1. **It comes from God and God alone** - The Holy Spirit indwells all true believers. It is he who fills us with true joy.^{LVI} The fruit of the Spirit Galatians 5:22-23 lists joy as the second element.

2: **It comes from obedience to God's Word** – It is not in human nature to be subservient to anyone. We are rebellious from birth. Yet Jesus makes it clear in obeying His Word we can be filled with true joy, John 15:9-11, *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. 11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

3. **It comes from our fellowship with God** - Psalm 37:4 *Delight thyself also in the Lord: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.* This may seem a strange verse to choose to lead off this section, but it will hopefully prove biblically sound. Some in the world today take this one verse and run with it, designing a whole theology around it. They seem to be convinced that if they are happy, (note the choice of words) with the Lord, He will be happy with them and grant them their hearts desires.

The problem of course for any basic theology student is simple the verse does not even come close to saying that. The key to the verse is *Delight thyself also in the Lord*: that is, we have complete and unconditional satisfaction in the Lord and all that He provides. No questions, no stipulations, no hesitation. Our desires need to match up with God's desires for our life. What is it that true Christians should desire? Peace and fulfillment in Christ, anything else is a bonus. What is it that we desire earthly things or fellowship with God? John a little later in 1 John 2:15-17, makes it clear, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes,*

and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

4. It comes from our fellowship with like-minded believers – Paul in Chapter 2^{LVII} of Philippians calls for the universal church to unify. That is for the church to have fellowship in the Spirit. He goes as far as to say, ‘if you want to make my joy complete, be likeminded.’ Ask yourself, if this is not true? Do not we too, feel joyous, even as Paul says complete, when we are united in the Spirit and focused and intent on one purpose?

There are reasons church members disagree even endure splits. Unfortunately, most often they have no biblical foundation. Yet given a central focus something to rally around, a conference, for example, the unifying effect is amazing. However, there are some Biblical impediments to Joy.

1. Sin is a joy killer – Anything that separates our fellowship with God, or like-minded believers is a joy killer. Sin is the biggest of all. Sin puts up that wall that separates us from God, for He cannot abide in sin. You cannot be living a willful sinful life and have complete joy. Those that think or claim they do are simply liars. John, in continuing his message of 1 John, writes the following under inspiration of the Holy Spirit: *6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* We all sin, it is our nature, and as much as we all want to claim to be completely new creatures^{LVIII} even Apostle Paul wrestled with the flesh.^{LIX} Yet it is not the occasional sinful act, the one that we readily repent of that is a Joy killer. It is the deliberate ongoing sinful act that tells God, my desires are more important than you.

2. Legalism is a Joy Killer- If we look at point #4c under **True Biblical Fellowship for Christians pp 16**, and the liberty together without Charity, we often get a receipt for Biblical Legalism^{LX}. What we are meaning by this is, does your or your church’s position on scripture promote the unity of the Faith that Paul and Peter^{LXI} speak of or more the legalism Jesus^{LXII} hated?

Today modern churches often exercise their legalistic right in the name of “public safety” or some other contrived ideal. Often continuing the persecution of inmates, the mentally ill, and others just for their past or perceived “issues.” While no one should argue against a safe church, demonizing individuals who have paid their debts to society and professed their faith in Christ alone, means Calvary was for naught. That is legalism at its worst and it is a sure-fire joy killer in any church.

3. Doubt is a joy Killer- Rare it is to quote a Quaker source but the following from Hannah Whitall Smith^{LXIII} is on point to this matter: *I remember reading once somewhere this sentence, “Perfect obedience would be perfect happiness, if only we had perfect confidence in the power we were obeying.” I remember being struck with the saying, as the revelation of a possible, although hitherto undreamed-of way of happiness; and often afterwards, through all the lawlessness and wilfulness of my life, did that saying recur to me as the vision of a rest, and yet of a possible development, that would soothe and at the same time satisfy all my yearnings.*

The fact that many “Christians” do not have perfect confidence in God is reflected in their everyday actions. We lack confidence in His ability to answer our prayers (or maybe it is we are demanding they be answered on our terms), we doubt He can heal a broken body, but neglect to ask why should He. God’s perfect will is not always the same as our natural desire and when the two collide it is a joy killer.

A good habit a friend encouraged us to each day when getting out of bed (literally while your feet are hitting the floor) begin by praying and asking the indwelling Holy Spirit to align my will with Gods by simply asking, *Lord do not let me do anything too stupid today.* It may seem foolish, but we are all capable of acting in rebellion against the living Holy God. Praying to mitigate the damage so to speak is never a bad thing.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Looking Inward

John in the follow-on verses to the main text presented here, 1 John 1:1-4^{LXIV}, goes on to ask some self-directed questions that cause the reader to Analyze their Fellowship with God and like-minded believers. First, in verse 5 John makes a declaratory statement: *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* God's character (moral being) is not being called into question here but is declared to all. It is God's very character that determines the type of fellowship we have with Him. A Holy God demands Holy Fellowship and John makes this clear in verse five.

In verses 6-7 John asks the following: *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

John says our fellowship is conditional, it is dependent upon us **walking in the light**. Today this phrase is often misinterpreted and misused by well-meaning believers. Modern evangelicals can be heard repeating this with the implication that one should behave appropriately or live one's life like an open book. While these are not in themselves bad, they are not contextual to what John (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit)^{LXV} is saying. Backing up a few words we find **walk in darkness, we lie, to walk in darkness** is to walk not in the light of Christ but the shadow of Satan. John is saying as such if you declare yourself to have Christian Fellowship but do not renounce sin, **we lie, and do not the truth**. In other words, we are fake or false "Christians," not the carnal Christians the world would have us believe can exist, but that is another argument, no John and Paul^{LXVI} agree we are children designed to walk in the light.

It is important to note that **walking in the light** and therefore Christian Fellowship is not dependent upon our perfection. If it, where we would be miserable failures. No, God expects us to have failures and John 1:1:9^{LXVII} was written for that purpose. **Walking in the light** means we are no longer slaves to sin, that we desire the light of Christ over the darkness of evil^{LXVIII}

Christ the Head of the Church

Walking in the light also requires that we, as believers, follow the example of Jesus who is the head of the bridegroom of the church.^{LXIX}

Most every “church” that self identifies as “Christian” identifies Christ as the head thereof. What is most interesting is that although they claim this, many fail miserably when it comes to practicing it. If one reads Colossians 1 or Ephesians 5^{LXX} Christ is the head of the church yet there is in these chapters much on fellowship and joy.

Paul says in Colossians 1:4 *the love which ye have to all the saints*, and in Ephesians 1:21 *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God*. Neither of these is possible without true fellowship, which comes only from submission to Christ as head of the Church. The fact that this is missing is apparent in the way churches show disdain for others who do not share their specific doctrine or theology. Now I am not speaking about cults and clear heretical teachings against Christ here, but denominational differences that cause “Christians” to hate fellow believers. Somehow, they failed to read and heed Paul’s words.

Seeking Outward

The closing point of the 1st chapter in 1 John is the need to recognize we are all sinners by nature. Verse 8 says: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*. Note v.10 not only do we deceive ourselves, but we make God a liar too. John says even the most Holy of Christians sin and need forgiveness. Thankfully we serve a God full of Grace and mercy who does not leave us wanting and provides the answer and way v.9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSION

John's first Epistle is packed full of great theological gems. Here are a few gleaned from the book:

1 John 2:1 - *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:* A sinless life (one not committed to willful sin, is a Victorious (Holy) Life.

1 John 2:26 - *These things I have written to you with reference to those who are trying to deceive you [seducing you and leading you away from the truth and sound doctrine].* (AMP) A life dedicated to the Lord is one Life Safe from Deceit.

1 John 4:7-9, 11, 16, 19^{LXXI} Love, is the theme of all these verses. The Love of God and The Love of Others.

1 John 1:7, 9, 2:2; 3:5; 4:10^{LXXII} Sin, is the theme here. Christ's propitiation for our sins and our God's grace in forgiveness.

Lastly:

1 John 1:3-4 *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* Greatest, of course, considering the subject of this thesis is A Joyful Life.

John says that Fellowship with us, that is fellow saints, and with the triune God is, in fact, full of complete joy. True Fellowship is found in none other, not on anything the world has to offer, not in the fleeting things that will fade away or give us temporary gratification.

When we defined Biblical Joy, we said it is *our proper response to circumstances (usually external) with inner peace and contentment found only in fellowship with God and like-minded believers.*

If one does a quick google search^{LXXIII} for “Seeking Inner Peace and Contentment” amazingly 5.7 million responses come back in under 1 minute. Most of them are self-help books, quotes, and the like all meant to make you feel better about yourself.

If, however, we add the word “Christians” to the front of the search, we get just over ninety-two thousand responses. We have noted elsewhere context is everything and here too, some of these results are not “Christ-Centered” nor even related to Inner Peace and Contentment. We use these comparisons to make the point that the “world” that is unbelievers are far more concerned with “Seeking Inner Peace and Contentment” than “True Believers.”

Why is this? Let us look at part of the definition from Webster’s 1828 Dictionary it reads: *Joy is a delight of the mind, from the consideration of the present or assured approaching possession of a good.* When we ask ourselves, what assurance does the world have, the answer is clear? Their hope, their joy is founded upon shifting sand.

On the other hand, when asked about Believers, we can unilaterally agree with Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 *Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* Our hope, our assurance, and yes, our Joy is secure in the solid rock that is the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

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L^{XV}

[https://www.gotquestions.org/
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L^{XVI}

[https://www.biblegateway.com
/passage/?search=Ephesians%
205%3A8&version=KJV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%205%3A8&version=KJV)

L^{XVII}

[https://www.biblegateway.com
/passage/?search=1+John+1%
3A9&version=KJV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1%3A9&version=KJV)

L^{XVIII}

[https://www.biblegateway.com
/passage/?search=John+3%3A
19&version=KJV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A19&version=KJV)

L^{XIX} [Matthew 25: 1-13 KJV - 'Then
shall the kingdom of heaven be
- Bible Gateway](#)

L^{XX}

[https://www.biblegateway.com
/passage/?search=Col+1%2C+
Eph+5&version=KJV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Col+1%2C+Eph+5&version=KJV)

L^{XXI}

[https://www.biblegateway.com
/passage/?search=1+John+4%
3A7-
9%2C+11%2C+16%2C+19++
&version=KJV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+4%3A7-9%2C+11%2C+16%2C+19++&version=KJV)

L^{XXII}

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3A7%2C+9%2C+2%3A2%3B
+3%3A5%3B+4%3A10&versi
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L^{XXIII}

[https://www.google.com/searc
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