

STUDY GUIDE

Fellowship with God

Part One

1 John 1:5–7

Big Idea

What does it mean to actually have fellowship with God? John writes to expose a false, Gnostic-style claim of fellowship that has no bearing on how a person lives, and to show that true fellowship with God — who is Light and in whom there is no darkness at all — always produces a changed, obedient, connected, and forgiven life.

Key Verses

"This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." — 1 John 1:5

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." — 1 John 1:6

"But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." — 1 John 1:7

Context

John writes against false teachers shaped by early Gnostic ideas. They claimed a special, elevated relationship with God through secret knowledge, and they taught a dualism that separated the body from the spirit — meaning a person's actions and lifestyle had no bearing on their spiritual standing. John confronts this head-on: a claim to fellowship with God that isn't backed by a changed life is a lie.

Related texts referenced: 2 Corinthians 11:3–4; James 2:19; Matthew 7:22–23; 2 Timothy 2:19.

I. Its Foundation (v. 5) — God Is Light

Fellowship with God begins with His nature, not ours. He sets the standard; we don't.

- Light pictures holiness, moral perfection, knowledge, and truth (1 Tim. 6:15–16; Ps. 119:105).
- Our problem: we are darkness by nature (Eph. 5:8), and sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:2).
- God's standard is perfection (Matt. 5:48) — a disclosure of our inability, not a call to try harder.
- The Gospel's answer: Christ rescues us from darkness and transfers us into His kingdom of light (Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9).
- Regeneration must precede fellowship — we must be born again to be counted as children of light (Jn. 3; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Takeaway: If there is no evidence of a changed life in Christ, there is no fellowship with God.

II. Its Fraud (v. 6) — A False Claim Exposed

John exposes a claim to fellowship with God that is contradicted by lifestyle.

a. A lifestyle of darkness

- "Walk" (peripateo) = one's customary, patterned way of living.
- "Darkness" (skotia) = the realm of sin, the absence of light — not always gross sin, but anything that chokes out the Word (Mark 4:19).
- This isn't about sinless perfection (v. 8 clarifies that) — it's about a decisive break from a sin-pattern through ongoing confession and repentance (Rom. 6:14; 1:9).

b. A lifestyle of deception

- "Lie" (pseudomai) = to deceive through a false lifestyle; gross hypocrisy.
- Judas is the picture: near Jesus, yet a devil from the beginning.
- You may fool people, but God knows the secrets of the heart (Ps. 44:20–21).

Takeaway: Better to be exposed and repent now (1:9; Prov. 28:13) than to be exposed at the judgment.

III. Its Fruit (v. 7) — What True Fellowship Produces

Fellowship with God cannot be fruitless. It produces observable, ongoing change.

a. A righteous lifestyle

- Consistent, patterned righteousness — not perfection, but direction and repentance (Heb. 12:14; 1 Tim. 6:11).
- Even godly figures who sinned badly (David, Peter) repented, turned, and returned.

b. A commitment to fellowship (with other believers)

- Fellowship with God is never lived in isolation — it produces koinonia with the church (1 Cor. 10:16).
- You cannot fellowship with Christ without fellowshipping with His Bride.

c. The promise of forgiveness

- Written to believers already walking in the Light, not as a formula for unbelievers to earn forgiveness.
- "Cleanses" is present tense — continuous, ongoing cleansing through the blood of Christ.
- Ties directly into 1 John 1:9 — confession meets a faithful and righteous forgiveness.

Key Word Studies

- Light (Greek: phos) — holiness, moral perfection, truth, and knowledge.
- Walk (Greek: peripateo) — customary, patterned lifestyle or behavior.
- Darkness (Greek: skotia) — the realm of sin; absence of light.
- Lie (Greek: pseudomai) — to deceive, especially by a false or hypocritical lifestyle.
- Fellowship (Greek: koinonia) — close, mutual participation and communion.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between "identifying" as a Christian and actually being known by God (Matt. 7:22–23; 2 Tim. 2:19)? Why is this distinction important?

2. How does Gnostic dualism (separating the body/actions from the spirit) still show up in how people think about faith today?
3. The sermon says fellowship with God "begins with Him," not us. How does that reshape the way you think about drawing near to God?
4. Read 1 John 1:6. What's the difference between struggling with sin as a believer and "walking in darkness" as a lifestyle?
5. "Darkness" doesn't always mean gross sin — it can be anything that chokes out God's Word in your life (Mark 4:19). What might that look like practically (habits, hobbies, priorities)?
6. Why is it significant that fellowship with God (v. 7) naturally produces fellowship with other believers? What does this say about Christians who avoid church community?
7. "Cleanses" in verse 7 is continuous, present-tense action. How should that truth affect a believer who feels weighed down by ongoing sin or failure?
8. Honestly reflect: is your "claim" of fellowship with God backed up by your walk — at home, at work, and in secret?

Personal Reflection

Take a few minutes to answer honestly before God.

1. Where is there a gap between what I say I believe and how I actually live?

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2. What specific "darkness" — sin, habit, or misplaced priority — is choking out God's Word in my life right now?

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3. What would it look like this week to walk in the Light rather than merely talk about it?
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Memory Verse

"But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." — 1 John 1:7