

1 John 1–10

“Being in Fellowship”

One of the aspects of Christian community that I stand by is fellowship with each other. We are a community of believers and it is important that we spend our time together in fellowship. Fellowship allows us to be with each other and to get to know each other. It allows us to be a part of each other's lives and share in the joys and hardships together. Fellowship is a fundamental part of being in a Christian community together.

Today we begin a look at the letters of John in the new testament. Today we begin with 1 John, the first of the three letters that are called more formally, the Johannine Letters. In these letters we get a glimpse into the very early Christian communities that were around right after Christ's death and ascension.

In these letters we see how a community functions and how the community lives out the gospel. These letters allow us to see a direct application of the gospel. It is believed that the writer of these letters is the same author of the gospel of John and there is much correlation between these texts. We'll find out more comparison between the texts as we explore these books together.

In the section we are to explore today, we look at the section that very much follows the beginning of the gospel of John. We have words of life, stating what the life that we experience in God is like. We begin our first mention of fellowship in this passage, the fellowship that we share with God and with Jesus Christ.

In our Christian community, we very much believe that we are in fellowship with God and Jesus Christ and also with the Holy Spirit. It is through these connections that we are who we are today. We are created by God, we are given hope through Jesus Christ, and we are shaped by the

Holy Spirit. All of this is the trinity, the standing element with unites our faith into one. This fellowship is a key component to who we are today.

There are two elements of fellowship that I wish to highlight today. The first is that there is fellowship in prayer, prayer that connects and puts us in fellowship with God. The other is the fellowship that we experience through action, for through the motivation of faith we act on the faith we have so that others may know that new life that comes through a faith in Jesus Christ.

Looking at the first element of fellowship we discuss today, It is often a matter of debate and discussion as to what being in fellowship with God and Christ look like. For typically we don't use the word fellowship to describe our relationship with God and Christ, like the writer of 1 John is using. But I believe that we can ask questions and think about what we can do to be connected with God and Christ.

Probably the most thought of way to be in fellowship with God is to pray. For it is in prayer that we can lift up our concerns to God, we can lift up the troubles that we are facing, lift up the people who are in need of love. We can also praise God in our prayers, but giving our heartfelt praise and joy to God for the blessings and good things that come about in our lives as believers.

It seems simple and obvious that prayer would be a way to be in fellowship with God, but it is important that we remind ourselves of this simple act. As a way of guidance in prayer I encourage you to look at the Lord's prayer that we do every Sunday. For in this prayer we hit many of the examples of prayers that we experience, such as asking for God's guidance, asking for forgiveness for what we have done wrong, and offering up praise to God. It's a great point to start, but not the only way to pray.

Praying can definitely manifest itself in various ways. Even if you struggle with the Lord's

prayer, a simple prayer such as “Thank you God for this day” or even “God help me” are just as valid prayers as the most eloquent prayers that you hear done by seasoned leaders of prayer. For all prayer is valid. All prayer that is lifted up earnestly is valid. All prayer is heard by God.

Another way that we can be in fellowship with God and Christ is through our actions. For I believe we are called not to just a passive faith, but a faith that can be lived in a way that others can see your faith. Faith drives us to action, so that others can experience the good love of Christ in their daily living.

Just recently, I saw a good example of how faith can be lived out in such a way that others can experience the love of Christ. There is a show on TV called Chopped, it’s on the Food Network. The show is a competition, where four chefs compete to create dishes that are made from extreme ingredients. The show starts with four chefs, but as the chefs go through the courses, one chef is eliminated every round until there is just one chef left, and that is the “Chopped Champion” of the evening and win \$10,000.

This last week they had an episode of Chopped where it was composed of chefs who had earned second place or less in the competition, so they were back in an effort to try to win yet again. In this episode there were two chefs that stood out for they either had a good reason to compete or they were simply good people.

One of the chefs, Chef Yoanna, was competing so that she could win the money and be able to fly back to Europe to see her grandmother who had raised her. She credited her grandmother for making her the person she is today and deeply misses her grandmother. She said numerous times throughout the show that she was a chef because of her grandmother’s love of cooking and wanted to make her grandmother proud in her career. I think this motivation was a good one, for the money

would definitely allow her to visit her family.

The other chef that stood out was Chef Lance. Lance was actually a cook for a YMCA camp up in upper New York and was a person that many times discussed his faith on the show. He claimed that he was once a person who didn't care much for other people, but through his faith he was a person that cared about people first rather than his own selfish ambitions. He was competing for the art of cooking, to see if he could push himself hard enough to create dishes that were creative and unique. To me, he showed that he did not have anything to prove to anyone but was driven by art. I think that his motivations were good as well, for he was wanting to push himself, not to win the competition for his ego.

The action of faith that occurred that showed me how fellowship can be shown in action came at the end of the show. Chef Lance had won the competition and Chef Yoanna had again received second place. But this is where things get interesting. During the breaks of the show, the two of them had talked and discussed how they believed they were both winners for they had reached this point in their careers. Chef Lance earnestly believed that he had not one, for he did have some missteps in his cooking.

So when Chef Lance was declared the winner, he generously gave Chef Yoanna the money, so that she could go to Europe to see her grandmother. This was an act of selflessness by Chef Lance, a move that was generated by his faith and concern for other people. He wasn't in the competition for the money, but for the art and wanted to share his blessing with another person. It was a very moving episode of the show, one that will stand out in my memory.

This right here is an act of fellowship. It is an act of fellowship with God for Chef Lance served another person. He reflected his faith of love for another person, and showed how blessings

needs to be shared with other people. This act of fellowship is a witness to the faith that he stands by and to the faith that has shaped who he is. He could have very easily taken the money for himself, but instead, he shared with another person. Through this he was in fellowship with Christ for following an example of faith, but he was also in fellowship with another person.

It is in the spirit of fellowship that we are called to live out the example of 1 John. For we are called to have our fellowship in the light of Christ, so that we may live out faith in this world. As the letter says “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.”

For it is in fellowship that we experience God’s grace in our lives. For it is in fellowship that we can experience the love of Christ through another person. For it is in fellowship that we become believers who walk in the light of God.

It is through Jesus Christ that we see the major acts of fellowship in his ministry. Christ served other people in his ministry, for he came not to be served but to serve others so that they may have life. His acts of fellowship were like those when he washed the feet of his disciples, for he was showing care and respect for his disciples in that act. He was showing his love for others through his actions. He even showed his love for his disciples in prayers, keeping the fellowship between the Father and himself together as one.

I believe that we are to take the fellowship given to us in 1 John to heart whenever we act together as believers and when we are with other people who may not be a part of the church. Our witness through fellowship can be a great tool for showing others how we love God and how we live the faith of Christ out in this world. It is through our silent actions of showing genuine concern, care, and joy with others that we may be able to share the light of Christ to the world. I encourage

us to do this things whenever we are with other people, and when we are in prayer with God.

This is just the beginning of what fellowship with each other looks like. Fellowship ultimately transcends words and connects us with other people. Think about that, the next time we gather as believers, whether that be here in church or outside in the community. Live the faith of Christ so that others may know Christ. In the spirit of Christ, may we forever reflect the bonds of faith that we receive through our faith in God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.