

1 JOHN: DEFEATING MISLEADING SPIRITUAL ERROR TRULY TO COMMUNE WITH GOD

Part IV: Quickly Discerning Characteristics Of True Fellowship With God

(1 John 2:3-11)

I. Introduction

- A. So far in our studies of 1 John, we have found God is absolutely Biblical so that one who fellowships with Him must function in full alignment with Scripture. We have also found that violating this alignment to God's Word is sin, and must be confessed to God for us to be restored to fellowship with Him.
- B. However, as there exist many Scripture directives to be obeyed, we may wonder how we can **quickly** tell if we truly fellowship with God to make practical adjustments in our lives as the need may arise. John supplies this **quick** yet **accurate overview** of godly fellowship for our practical needs in 1 John 2:3-11:

II. Quickly Discerning Characteristics Of True Fellowship With God, 1 John 2:3-11.

- A. Characteristic One: **Obeying God's Commands To Us**, 1 John 2:3-4:
 - 1. John noted that we can tell we "know" God, or, better, experientially "know" Him "in a personal way" of true spiritual fellowship (cf. John 14:21-23) by the test of the degree to which we heed the commands we have received from Him, 1 John 2:3; Bible Knowledge Commentary, N. T., p. 888.
 - 2. A believer who claims to fellowship with God but clearly disobeys the commands he has personally received from God is not only out of fellowship with God, but lies in his claim about it, 1 John 2:4.
- B. Characteristic Two: **A Loving Nature Growing Out Of Heeding God's Word**, 1 John 2:5.
 - 1. When one heeds what he knows is God's command to him, God's love is perfected in him, 1 John 2:5a.
 - 2. Thus, such a loving *nature* that is linked to heeding God exposes one truly fellowships with God, 2:5b.
- C. Characteristic Three: **A Life That Imitates Christ's Earthly Godliness**, 1 John 2:6.
 - 1. When John refers to the last pronoun, "he" in 1 John 2:6, he alludes to Christ as He came into the world and lived among the apostles, cf. 1 John 1:1-3.
 - 2. Thus, we know we fellowship with God if we live uprightly like Jesus did in His earthly life, 2:6.
- D. Characteristic Four: **Love For Other Believers That Grows Out Of Heeding God's Word**, 2:7-10a.
 - 1. The old and new command mentioned in verses 7-8 is Christ's initial command for the disciples to love each other in John 13:34, which love was exhibited by Christ and the Apostles, cf. 1 John 2:9-10.
 - 2. Since that love grows out of obedience to God (1 John 2:5), a characteristic of a believer who truly fellowships with God is that, growing out of his obedience to God, he loves other believers, 2:5, 9-10.
- E. Characteristic Five: **A Life That Avoids Tripping Up Others To Sinning**, 1 John 2:10b, 11a.
 - 1. As hatred for another believer rises from walking in darkness (1 John 2:11a) and darkness and light are opposites (1 John 1:5, 8 et al.), then one who abides in the darkness of disobeying Scripture influences others to stumble into sin versus what the godly do, 1 John 2:10; Westcott, The Epistles of John, p. 56.
 - 2. Thus, one in fellowship with God characteristically avoids tripping up others into sin, 1 John 2:10b.
- F. Characteristic Six: **A Life That Is Not Blind To Spiritual Realities**, 1 John 2:11b.
 - 1. As we have established that walking in darkness is the result of not walking in the light, since one who walks in darkness is blind and does not know where he goes, the opposite is true of the godly, 2:11b.
 - 2. Thus, one who fellowships with God is not blind to spiritual realities as are the ungodly, 1 John 2:11b.

Lesson: For a **RAPID** but **ACCURATE** test of true fellowship with God, (1) we know one fellowships with God if (a) he heeds what he knows God has revealed to him from Scripture, (b) if he has a loving nature that results from this obedience, (c) if he imitates Christ's righteousness, (d) if he loves other believers because he heeds Scripture, (e) if he avoids tripping up others into sin and (f) if he discerns these truths. (2) Conversely, displaying (a) disobedience to God's known Scripture revelation to one's self, (b) lacking a loving nature, (c) failing to imitate Christ's righteousness, (d) failing to love other believers, (e) tending to trip up others into sin and (f) failing to be discerning in such spiritual matters signifies one is out of fellowship with God!

Application: (1) May we use this test to discern our own status and either confess our waywardness to the Lord for restoration to fellowship with Him or to rejoice in God's signal that we fellowship with Him. (2) May we use this test to discern impostors to the true fellowship with God for our protection.