

# What Does Fellowship With God Look Like? (Part 2)

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Back to 1 John. 1 John 1:1 "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the word of life. The life was made manifest and we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us. That which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete."

Now, I've parked here for two sermons already. And I really intend to stay here for two more - one today and one next week. And the reason that I want to stay here is because the very reason John gives as to his intention in writing has to do with the truth about relationships. The purpose of this letter is this: to bring you into fellowship with God. This is the heart and soul of eternal life. This is the heart and soul of this letter. I want to excite you about this if I can. I want to bring it before your minds, into your attention. Fellowship.

What I'm really wanting us to ask is: Why? Why does he use that word here? What does it mean for us? And what you see is - what you need to realize and recognize is that the first three verses, what's John driving home? At least the first half of verse 3? He's driving home the historical reality of the Incarnation - of God becoming Man. He touched Him. He saw Him. He heard Him. Why is he driving this home? Clearly because Christ is the common bond in all of this fellowship. There's no fellowship with the apostles or with God or with one another - any other Christian - except by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And you notice the stress in verse 3. It's not about having fellowship with just any other Christian. It's on having fellowship with the apostles. Why? The only way you can have fellowship with God and with other true believers is to believe what the apostles have taught about Christ. John is indicating - this is what we need to see here - John is indicating that he belongs, he's part of this circle. A privileged inner circle. So privileged that if one has fellowship with his circle, you're in. In what? You've got the Treasure of all treasures. Do you realize what this is? The Father and the Son are allowing believers into their own relationship of love and fellowship. That's what we have going on.

So the question we asked last week is this: What is the basis for this term "fellowship" even getting used here in 1 John 1? (incomplete thought) Koinonia. James had this word today. You saw it. It came out of Philippians. If fellowship means that we have something in common or we're partakers with or we're partners with, we share - well, what is it? What is it that I as a saved sinner actually get to share in common with God the Father and God the Son?

And last week, I gave three answers to that question that jump out of the immediate context. One: True fellowship with God - we become sharers of the truth as it concerns Christ. That's the basis for this. That's how you get in. You believe what God says is true about His Son. We see it throughout 1 John. We're going to get into it more in the weeks ahead.

The second thing I hit on is true fellowship with God involves sharing the truth about myself. And one of the things there primary to 1 John 1 is that I'm sharing God's ideas about me and my sin. I've been brought into that circle where I see myself how God sees me and I see my sin the way God sees me. And so I don't say that I don't have any sin. And I confess my sin. We saw that.

The third thing I brought in had to do with v. 5-6. "This is the message we have heard about Him and proclaim to you that God is light." So if you have fellowship with Him, you share His light with Him, so much so that we walk in the light if that light has been shared with us, as He is in the light, and we have fellowship with one another. We have fellowship in this circle. So those were the first three things that I dealt with. The truth concerning the Son, the truth concerning us, and the fact that we become imitators of Him. We walk in the light.

Well, this week, I want to continue and look at three more glorious realities that John - specifically, John hits on that is part and parcel of this fellowship. I want us to look at it. Now, I think that we know that John is the Apostle of Love. Now, I didn't deal with love first primarily because John doesn't introduce that to us first. But if there's one thing that is central - we might say even equal to the fact that we're brought into that realization of the truth about Jesus Christ; if there's something else that John wants to emphasize in a central way, it is that we enter into fellowship in His love. This is not a minor thing. The fact is that in the original, in the Greek, you find some form of love come up forty-eight times in this epistle. That's a lot when you consider this, he only uses some form of the word twenty-six times in his whole Gospel. There's no greater concentration of love anywhere else in the Bible. This is central to this fellowship.

Now, I'll just tell you something that has jumped out at me. As I've been preparing for this series, I've been reading 1 John and listening to it on my phone over and over and over, but I've also been reading the Gospel of John and listening to that over and over. And one of the things that has really jumped out at me is this: 1 John feels a lot like John 13-17. Anybody know what that portion of Scripture is referred to? John 13-17? What's that? The Upper Room Discourse and actually we know in there that I think he might kind of shift during that as far as his location. But yes, that's called the Upper Room Discourse. What it is primarily, if you want to know what it's all about, if you're out there wondering, oh, I don't really know what John 13-17 is all about, this is the Last Supper. This is where Jesus washes their feet. This is where Jesus gives His parting instruction. That doesn't mean that He doesn't say anything to them after this, but He doesn't have much to say to them after this. These chapters are His instruction to them before He goes to the cross. 1 John overflows with the truths out of those chapters. And I want you to see something. I want you to look, if you have bookmarks or if you just want to stick your finger in there in 1 John. We're going to go back and forth between John and 1 John. But I want you to see something because I want to deal with three things today that make up important and key aspects of this fellowship as well. And there's something that I want you to see with your own eyes that I think is really important, really helpful.

John. Look first at John 15:9. "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love." Now in the months ahead, we are going to deal with love repeatedly in 1 John. What I want you to see right here is this, primarily that little possessive pronoun: My. My love. Fellowship is sharing. God is allowing us into this inner circle where we get to share the most intimate things with Him. And Christ even identifies this love as Mine. It's My love that I want you

to abide, I want you to stay in it. I want you to live there. I love that [possessive] pronoun! I love it! And it shows up three times. Or at least possessing three different aspects of our fellowship.

Look at 14:27, back just a chapter. "Peace I leave with you." Not just any peace. "My peace." Here's this fellowship. Christ is calling us to it. You've got to see, I was telling you before, salvation is so much more than: I'm not going to hell. He's saying I want you to live in My love. Abide there. I've got something else that's Mine that I'm going to share with you too. "Peace I leave with you... My peace I give to you."

And I want you to see this again. Look back at John 15:11. "These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be full." That's what I want to look at today. Love and peace and joy. These are so essential to the fellowship that we have.

Well, let's think about love. Remember, remember! Everybody has to stay on the same page here and remember, keep this in mind. We're simply asking the question as to why John introduces this term "fellowship." Why? When he's wanting to tell us about eternal life and he's telling us: We saw Him. We held Him. We heard Him. We're touching, we looked upon, we gazed. We are here to tell you, we are witnesses of this. And he's bringing in fellowship. Why? Why? What do we have in common with God? And what is it that God shares with those He draws into this intimate circle of fellowship?

And the first thing I want us to think about today is this one: God shares His love with us. And you know what? It doesn't overwhelm us. I thought about that. You know, a lot of times when I'm studying I imagine myself here. And I imagine your faces. And I thought, you know when I say that, nobody's going to jump up and down. It doesn't overwhelm us, and you know why it doesn't? Because one of two things is true. Lost and even saved, naturally, we expect it. We just expect it. Or, there's a second reason. And this tends to plague, I think, more Christians than it does the lost man is Satan would be glad to have you expect God's love while you're lost, but once you're saved and you really are in that realm, then he would have you doubt it, right? We were under the other extreme and we question whether His love is really upon us. But you know what, either way, whether you expect it or whether you doubt it, what does it do? It drains the excitement and wonder out of it, doesn't it?

Well, think about 1 John. Forty-eight times he's going to hit on this. There's no question that love is uppermost in the mind of John. Love is central to this fellowship. And I want you to think about this circle of love. Look in 1 John. Now keep your finger in John. Like I say, we're going to go back and forth to John and 1 John. But in 1 John 4:8, some real plain words. "Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love." And you know what's so interesting to me about that verse? It doesn't say who you love. Now, there are other places it talks about who we love as Christians, but right here he's saying this: if you don't love, you don't know God because God is love. You know much like you get brought into this circle of intimacy with God, it's a circle of light, and that light will transform you so that you walk in that light the way somebody in the light walks. The thing is this circle is also a circle of love. God is love. And if you've been brought into fellowship with Him, you will love.

And it's so positive, it's so certain that "anyone who does not love does not know God." You're not in fellowship with Him. Who do we love? Oh, especially those within the circle. That doesn't mean we don't have a love for the lost, but there is such a unique love within the circle. John hits every conceivable exchange and reception of love - giving and receiving of love within

the circle. He does it in a way nobody else does. Throughout his writings, don't look at all these, but just listen to me. Oh, he loves to tell us that the Father loves the Son. And I'm not going to be exhaustive on this, but John 3:35, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand." John 5:20, "The Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself is doing." John 10:17, "For this reason the Father loves Me," Jesus says, "Because I lay down My life that I may take it up again." John 17:24, "Father, I desire that they also whom You have given Me may be with Me where I am to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world." And check this one out, John 17:23, just listen to this: "I in them and You in Me," Jesus is praying to His Father, "that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me." Now I'm showing you the Father's love for the Son, but what's amazing is the Father loves us even as the Father loves Christ. Take that "as" how you will. To the extent? It can mean that. What I'm telling you is whatever you want to do with that, we are coming into a circle where some way that means something! Does it mean that He loves us as much as He loves the Son? We're getting drawn in to the very Triune love here.

John tells us that the Son loves the Father. John 14:31, "I do as the Father has commanded Me so that the world may know that I love the Father." The Father loves those He saves. John 16:27, "For the Father Himself loves you." What's so amazing to me is how many of these verses, love between one member and another member within this circle - it's just not limited. It's like that love is expressed, but another one is expressed. Father, You love Me, but I want it to be known that You love them like You love Me. Here the Father loves who He saves, but it says that "the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me." The Father loves the believer. The believer loves Christ. 1 John 4:10 "And this is love, not that we have loved God, (but we have), but that He loved us and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:16, "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love. Whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in him." We have the Son's love for the saved. James was talking about Paul's love for the Philippians being a manifestation of the affection of Christ Jesus. Did you know Christ has an affection for His people? Listen to this, John 13:1, "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." John 15:9, "As the Father has loved Me..." (listen to this) "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love." The Father loved the Son and so has Christ loved His disciples. 1 John 3:16, "For by this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." He loved us. We should love the brethren.

You see that the saved love the Father. 1 John 5:1, "Everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him." You have the Christian loving God the Father, the Christian loving his fellow Christian. The saved love the Son, John 14:21. "Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me, and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father." You love Me, Jesus says, and you will be loved by My Father. "And I will love you." "I will love him and manifest Myself to him." So often, this love is just so intertwined. It's going back and forth. "The Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me," John 16:27, "and believed that I came from God." (incomplete thought) John hits on all these like none of the other Gospels does. A literal world of love. And then of course, we have the saved loving the

saved. John 13:35, "By this all people will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another." 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another."

Now, here's what's interesting to me. I was thinking about fellowship and I thought, you know, fellowship can also be translated partnership. And I thought about two guys that have partnership. They can own a business together. And that's what they have in common. They both own it together. I was just listening last night to a news report about a couple. You know, Al Mohler does these news briefs and he was talking about a couple that are married, but this is this modern family model, they're married, but she has a relationship with another woman; he has a relationship with other men, but they stay married and sleep in separate bedrooms and that's their family so that they can raise their common child together. And you see, in some way, we could say well, there's a partnership in the sense that they share the same child together, but we would look at that and we would say something is lacking. And a partnership in business is not the deepest expression of fellowship.

You know what's very interesting? James hit on this reality in Philipppians. It jumped out at me because this is along the lines of my thinking. Paul says this to the Philipppians: You alone have reached a level of fellowship with me by giving and receiving. (incomplete thought). Paul would not have said that I don't have fellowship with any other church. But he could say, Philipppians, I have a fellowship with you in a way that I don't have fellowship with anybody else. Why? Because there's been giving and receiving. You know, the most intimate expressions of fellowship take place when there is actually a giving and receiving. Think about that in marriage, right? A marriage where we just have some things in common, like a common child, well, that may be one level. But the more intimate it is, the more they're giving and receiving from one another. And you think about what God is bringing us into - this circle. I am His and He is mine. He's given Himself to us. We give ourselves to Him. Brethren, giving and receiving. Giving and receiving. I want you to think about this. You need to receive the Father's love. You need to receive God's love to be in the most innermost realm of this fellowship. Receiving. Give and receive. Receiving is so essential to this.

Brethren, listen to this, and I want you to look at this. If you've been holding your place back in John 16, go back there. Brethren, we must receive the love of God. That is to be a healthy church. That is to be intimately in this fellowship. That is to be abiding in this inner realm. In John 16:26, Jesus says, "In that day..." Again, this comes out of that Upper Room Discourse. "In that day, you will ask in My name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf." What? Where's He going? You're not going to ask on our behalf? We need You as an intercessor. Where's He going with this? Well, He's wanting to point out a very sweet truth. Verse 27, "For the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God." Jesus says, look, I'm not teaching you, I'm not instilling in you the fact that you need to ask in My name in any way, shape, or form because the Father is reluctant. I don't need to convey your requests to the Father because He needs to be warmed up towards you. I don't need to ask Him to love you or be kind to you. He Himself feels only love for you already. Brethren, you have to understand what it means to be saved and to have this eternal life. This is the heart of this eternal life. To be drawn into this inner circle where all is love. The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. The Father loves the children of God and the Son loves the children of God and the children of God love the Father and they love the Son and they love

one another. And to be drawn into this, there is this giving and there is this receiving of love. And Jesus wants to leave His disciples with this reality as He's going out of this world. Jesus is teaching us that the saints are to see God as full of love towards them.

But you know what? It's sadly not the case for many Christians. They often hesitate to believe in this. Christians are often questioning within themselves whether God does truly love them. And can you see? That hinders fellowship at the deepest level. You know if you've got a guy who is always calling into question the love of a woman, always calling it into question, does that help their fellowship? If she is constantly giving expressions of that love, and affirming by her words, I love you, and yet he always calls it into question, that harms it. This is a relationship with a Person - or we might say with three Persons. We have a relationship with the Trinity. And it's not meant to be this vague, ambiguous, far off type of relationship. We are being beckoned to abide in the inner recesses of this circle of love.

Is this not an area where many of us need to grow? How many Christians, you have dark and disturbing thoughts about God's love towards you? And then God comes along and He gives us texts. He says to His Son: Tell them I love them in John 16:27. Tell them! Assure them that they are to pray in Your name, but not because I'm aloof from them; I'm far off, I'm the god of deism towards them. Nothing of the sort. God comes along and says: My Son, tell them, tell them My love. Tell them I want them to rise above, I want them to come up here and abide in My love where all is rest. I want them to come up here and live above fears and anxieties and the storms and the clouds that so often tend to engulf them. Come up here and rest your souls in this. This is clearly what God is saying! Come up here. It's most definitely God's will. You need to understand, it is God's will that we see Him as every bit the loving Father. Every bit. Does He not assure us of that love by giving us His Son? Did He not? Did it not say in 1 John 4:9, "In this the love of God was made manifest among us..." God says this to us: My children, here is My love manifest. I gave My Son for you. Does He not assure us of His love by making us children? Again, 1 John 3:1, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called the children of God." He comes along and He says I'm wanting to convince you of My love. I gave you My prized possession. I gave you My Son. This inner circle of My love - it's My family. I've made you My children. That's the manner of love I have for you. Does He not assure us of His love by putting - in some way, He is putting His love for us on par with or on a level with the love He has for His Son. Do you remember John 17:23? "I in them, You in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and love them even as You loved Me." Christians themselves have been caught up into the love of the Father for the Son. God does not intend to have us run around scared all the time and insecure, malcontent, and unfulfilled. You're loved by the Almighty Himself with the very same love He reserves for His Son.

And what response does He want from us? When a husband takes a wife and pours his love on her, what response does he want back? It's no different with God. Does God want a relationship with us? Does He want fellowship with us where He only gives? Look, God does not need anything from us to become fulfilled. And yet, there's no mistaking it, God wants our love. God wants it. That's the response to God's love that He looks for in us. He wants us to love Him in return. Surely it's so. Is that still not the greatest commandment? He wants us to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. But brethren, He wants it to truly be love. He wants

us to love Him with all of our being, but He wants it to truly be love, not this dry formal thing. He wants a heart aglow for Him. He wants us to delight in Him. That's what He wants. That's the response He wants. And when the believer recognizes God's love and he receives it and delights, think about it, You have a believer who's recognizing: Wow! God loves me! And the response is that when he recognizes such love and he receives it; he takes it, oh, I believe it! I relish in that. He delights in it. He ponders it. He meditates on it. And then he returns that love by a desire to be with God and commune with God and delight in God and to be close to that object. Brethren, when you make decisions in your life because they center around your delight and your affection for God, He is most glorified. Undoubtedly He is! When you make decisions in your life to do this or to do that, He's not looking for legalism - when you do things because it's like: Well, I have to keep this stringent list of rules. You know when you grit your teeth. That's not it. But when you say, you know what, I'm going to do this in my life because I love Him... I'm going to do this because I don't want any shadow to pass between He and I. God is delighted in that! When we're giving and receiving love with God, that is fellowship with God.

But I know with some of you, there's this fear, there's this dread because you come along and you say, well, my fear and my dread is there because I don't know if His love is towards me. And you're trying to convince me that His love is towards me, but I know His wrath is towards lots of people and I read in the Bible that there are a lot of people that are deceived. That's where I'm troubled. You're trying to convince me that I should believe that God loves me, but what if I wake up one day and I find out that I wasn't in the inner circle at all? I was trying to make myself believe something that wasn't true. Well, listen, I would just say this as I pass out of this section. Remember John 16:27, "For the Father Himself loves you." Why? "Because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God." Look, I would just say this, if you are trusting the Lord, if your faith is in Him, if you're clinging to Him and He is your only hope, and there has been a love in your soul awakened, a love awakened for Christ, a joy in Him and appreciation for Him, you find a beauty in Him, a draw towards Him, and your rest is in Him, The Father's love is yours. If you're not there; if you're not resting in Him, then no, you don't have rights to this love. You remember what's happening in 1 John. You believe what John is setting forth about Christ to enter this fellowship.

Anyways, let's move on. The next thing I want us to think about is peace. We're going to look a lot more at this love in the coming months, like I say. But peace. And of course, the peace flows from this love. It flows from a confidence in this love. Even this too, this may not excite you at first, but just hold on. I know this doesn't immediately come out of the context of 1 John, but it does come out of the text that I showed you - John 14:27. If you've got your finger still there, look at this again. John 14:27. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." Now the reason that this jumps out at me in such pronounced fashion, again has to do with that possessive pronoun: My. My peace. He says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you." I hope this hits you like it hits me. There's something very personal about this. And is Jesus calling this "My peace" because He's simply saying I form it and give it to you? Or might He rather be saying this? This is a peace that I personally have Myself. This is My peace because it's the very peace that I bask in under the smile of My Father. I'm bringing you into My peace.

Can you picture the disciples when Jesus is saying this to them? They're not at peace. Let's look at 14:1. "Let not your hearts be troubled." Why does He say that? Because their hearts were troubled. Look at 14:27 where we just read. The end of the verse, "Let not your hearts be troubled," He says it again. "Neither let them be afraid." Why? They're troubled and they're afraid. You look again over at 16:6. "Because I've said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart." They're troubled. They have sorrow. But you know what? Our Lord is at peace. They're full of anxiety and sorrow, while our Lord is at peace in His Father's love. And you say, how do we know that? Well, we see it here too. Look at 16:32. You see His rest. The hour is coming. The cross is at hand. It's come. You're all going to be scattered. You're going to go to your homes. You're going to leave Me alone. Yet here's His confidence. Here's the source of His peace. "I am not alone. The Father is with Me. I've said these things to you that in Me you may have peace." He's saying, I do. I have it. Look at 17:23. Again, we've looked at this text already. "So that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me." Jesus is just confident in this love. And you look again at 17:26, "The love with which You have loved Me may be in them and I in them." He's just confident of this love.

Jesus has been telling them - what has He been telling them? He's telling them He's going to die. He's been telling them He's going to be betrayed. He's been telling them that He's going away and they're troubled. They're sorrowful, but Jesus is calm. What? Jesus calm? You're just a few hours away from going to suffer one of the most painful indescribable deaths. Do you recognize crucifixion - yes, it was meant to kill. But it was meant to put a person in the most agonizing tortures oftentimes for days. In fact, Pilate was surprised that Jesus died so quickly. Typically, they did not die that quickly. It was a horrible way to die. Lord, peace? You're talking about peace and calm? You've got this tranquility and you're going to be scourged! You're going to be maligned. You're going to be abused. (incomplete thought) The Father's cup awaits You and You're at peace? How can this be?

Now listen, this is the kind of peace I want because two things about it: it's obviously a peace that transcends circumstances - (incomplete thought). Look, nobody has ever been on the eve of such horrors as Christ is at this moment. This is a peace that transcends all circumstances. But this is a peace I want because I don't only want that peace that transcends all circumstances, this is the peace of one who has never sinned. Do you recognize that? This is the calm - I don't want a different kind of peace than what He has. I want the peace of one who has never sinned. That's the kind I want. Isn't that the kind you want? Jesus was constantly in a peace before His Father as one who had always done His Father's will. And you see, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is going to the cross. I want that kind of perfect peace. Jesus went to the cross to open the door for us to share that peace. What kind of peace? The peace of being in a position where I can stand before the Father as though I have never sinned. There is no condemnation. He finds no blemish in me. I wear the robe of righteousness. Jesus went to the cross that I might have His peace just like that. And it's unlike any world peace that you can find. He says it's not like the world.

Now look, the world has forms of peace. I was thinking, what just popped in my head, financial peace. People talk about that today. An officer of the peace, a justice of the peace. Peace treaties - they're always trying to get one over in the Middle East. (incomplete thought) But I thought, you know, hey, I'm good with financial peace. When it's there, I like it. Do you not



like it? There are forms of peace in this world and I like to see the peace officer drive by my house. I live in an East side neighborhood. That gives me some comfort.

But you know what is the problem with all the different kinds of peace that the world gives, I'll tell you this, if there is an angry God waiting on the other side, then it's no good, whatever kind of peace it is. It's hollow. It's shallow. It's fleeting. It's just temporary. But Jesus had that, and that's what this inner circle is all about. Come in. Come in. I want you to have this peace. It is a peace where there is the confidence in the Father's love. It is a peace where there is that confidence that we are accepted by the Father. And of course, sin, sin! We still sin. He never did. He never was in a position like that. And oh, the devil is artful is using that against us. But you see, this all comes to a peace that He earned for us. It's a peace that is like the one He had. He can stand before His Father with no sin. But it's this truth of justification, oh, we've got to live on it. I'll tell you, this peace is only going to be nurtured as we thrive on, as we put our teeth into this doctrine of justification. That He laid down His life. That in the courtroom of God there is nothing against my account. There's nothing held. There's nothing to my record. There is total forgiveness. All my sins, not in part, but the whole. They're all nailed there. They're nailed to His cross. I don't bear any of them. Not a single sin. That is where this peace comes from. You can have a bad day and live in this peace. Jesus never had a bad day. He lived in the peace of His own righteousness. But you can have a bad day because you don't live in peace or not in peace before God based on your own merits. You've been brought into an inner circle that has been purchased by Christ. He is this eternal life that came into this world. He is the Word of Life. He came with the light of life. And He shines it upon us. We trust Him. And we have His love. We have His peace.

And there's one more thing. There's His joy. Look at John 15:11. Jesus not only imparts His own peace to His people, His own love, He shares His own joy. Now remember what we're talking about here. We're talking about why our relationship with God is called fellowship. It's a sharing. He shares with us His peace. Oh, what it is for a sinner to be brought where we can have perfect peace with the Father and Son. For a sinner to be able even to abide in such a place - even to visit a place temporarily, but we're called to rest there. And now there's joy. Joy. John 15:11, "These things I've spoken to you that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be full."

Now I want you to notice something. Notice the words, "I have spoken." Oh, that's key. The reason I know there's something significant about it is because He talks about My joy again. Jump over to John 17:13. And you see "My joy" again. And the thing is you find that He is again emphasizing that He speaks. In John 15:11, "These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you." John 17:13, "These things I speak in the world that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves." I want you to notice that connection. Speaking and joy. Do you all see it? Both times Jesus emphasizes "My joy," He is emphasizing that He speaks. If we would have what Jesus calls "My joy" we must open our ears to what proceeds forth from His lips. Listen, our joy as Christians is His joy. And His joy is vitally connected to His words, to what He says.

Now if I may make at least a partial stab at this, there's more here, but I at least want you to see this. If I'm going to make a partial stab at what it is that Jesus says that is so key to us having His joy, I would just have you take a look at John 15:10 which comes right before 15:11 where He says, "These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you..." Now I

recognize "these things" may go beyond the verse that was just spoken before it, but certainly the verse spoken just before it would be inclusive in these things. Notice what it says. "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love. Just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." You see, we're talking about abiding in the circle of love. "These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you and your joy may be full."

I don't think any of us questions that the richest, deepest, most profound joys in this world are attached to love. I think we all know that. But notice, the very joy of Christ that He Himself had sprang out of obedience to His Father's commandments which centered Him squarely in those bright rays of the love of the Father. To delight in the Father, He also had communion and fellowship with Him in the Father's will. He delighted in His will. He so delighted in the Father and delighted in everything that the Father delights in and everything that the Father loves. That's what the commandments are all about. It's the will of God. It's what God delights in. It's what is consistent with His own character and His own love, His own beauty, His own holiness. The path to joy for Jesus is the same path to joy for me. He flourished there in the delights of His Father's love through obedience. And so I'm called to abide in the radiance - all this glow of Jesus' love by the same thing.

And you know what the world does, they view Christianity: Oh, it's this dry and dreary thing. Just a list of rules - that's all Christianity is. No, it's not. It's about being drawn into this very circle where the love of Christ just radiates and permeates and surrounds. And lest you fall into this idea that it's gray, joyless rule-keeping, it's not; it's a world of love. Listen, when Jesus came along, He said, "My yoke is easy." Really? A yoke sounds hard. I've got a picture in my mind of cattle yoked, going across a hot field, dusty, all day long. I don't like yokes. Let's just inquire, Lord, why is Your yoke easy? Well, because you're yoked to Me. And I'm only going to take you near the still waters and the green grass. And I'm going to smother you with My love. Anything that I call you to as far as hardship here, it's momentary light affliction and then it's going to be all glory. It's good. "My burden is light." Why? Because My love is going to be there supporting you all the way through it. You know, John says it this way: he says that "this is love, that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not burdensome." Well, no. Anytime you find a Master who floods His servants with love, following His desires are not hard. Yeah, if they're tyrants; if they're like the devil, but that's not it. The joy of Christ arises, His joy came from being loved by the uttermost supreme of all Beings. He was one with His Father. One in purpose. This is the realm into which Christ bids us. Now listen, "My love," "My peace," "My joy." You're being invited into the fullness of this, not just temporarily - abide there. "Abide in My love," He says. The Father says: I love you. The Son says: I love you. The Spirit says, even though we haven't dealt a lot with the Spirit, the Spirit says: I love you.

Next week is where we get to the practical end of this. I've got lots of application. Next week, I want to ask you the question: How is your fellowship with God? I want a whole sermon dedicated to the practicalities of all this. I'm afraid that striving for intimate fellowship with the Father and with the Son is very much neglected. I want us to think about that. I hope you all prayerfully come back, gather together again next Sunday. Look, no matter how long it's been since you first came to faith in Christ, you need to guard your fellowship with God. You need to guard it. And there is a subjective aspect to this fellowship. And I want to look at it. You need to guard your relationship with all three Persons of the Godhead. Losing one's first love is a

biblically recognized reality that faces us. And it's a reality that gets addressed by God. You're familiar with it in Revelation. Look, this Christian life is not just about whether you show up on Sunday for this meeting. Or even if you're especially more disciplined and you can make it on Wednesdays. It's not about participating in the evangelism or even doing your daily devotions. As good as all those things are in their place, it's not just about that. Not just. Eternal life as John is telling us is about fellowship - continual fellowship, abiding relationship of love and intimacy with the Triune God. And taking time off is detrimental.