

CHRISTIAN KOINONIA

1 John 1:1-10

Key Verse: 1:3

“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”

There are many kinds of meetings. When we read the history of the Jews, we find that during the last 200 years, there were 2,600 meetings. Their meetings were all for the sake of their benefit-seeking. All kinds of associations and unions and leagues composed by human beings are very temporal, and these organizations are formed to stand against opponent organizations. As a result, human constitutions are all for the sake of satisfying their selfishness. But Christian “fellowship” (which appears four times in this chapter) is quite different. Its meaning is so deep and wide. It is fellowship with God. It is fellowship with Jesus. It is fellowship among those who realized the love of God, and it is the fellowship of those who understood the meaning of Jesus’ incarnation. The Apostle John wrote this letter to the Ephesians. At first, they were happy to have fellowship with God. They were happy to have fellowship with Christ, who was incarnated to be with us for a while. They were happy to have fellowship among their fellow Christians. But suddenly, there were many Gnostics within the church. Enemies without are easy to fight. But enemies within are very difficult to fight, mainly because weak humankind are happy to hear something bad about someone. They are happy to imitate bad people secretly, even though they come to church regularly. The Apostle John knew the bad influence of Gnostics within the church and began to write about the blind spot Gnostics and the grace and truth of Jesus’ incarnation. Finally, he explains what it means to have Christian koinonia.

First, Gnostics within the church.

In the early days of Christianity, there was a glory and a splendor, a magnificence and a radiance, because of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Christians had the flame of devotion and the thrill of world mission and earnest expectation of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Especially, the early Christians were very sure about God’s love and the meaning of Jesus’ incarnation. They also knew the meaning of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Especially, they were very happy to be pilgrims on earth while waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. There were many who were willing to obey the world mission command of Jesus. But when John observed local churches, they became habitual, traditional and half-hearted. They also became like old wineskins (Lk 5:37). Within one century, the

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early Christians became worthless and useless. Why did they become so? It was due to the bad influence of Gnostics. In nature, Gnostics were similar to modern dispensationalists, who say, “World mission is given only to the Eleven disciples, not at all to all of us.” Likewise, the Gnostics claimed their theory that spirit is good and matter is evil. Actually, their theory was derived from Plato, who said, “Spirit is good and body is evil.” But right before his death, Plato associated matter with spirit. The Gnostics were, in essence, intellectuals, but their scholarship was very imperfect. Aristotle perfected Plato's philosophy and it became the exact structure of the Catholic church. The Catholic church is totalitarian. An example of secular totalitarianism is Communism.

In short, Gnostics denounced the incarnation of Jesus Christ. They said, “If Jesus is perfect God and perfect man, Jesus cannot be God, because body is evil.” The influence of Gnostics was great. They influenced the early Christians to think that Jesus was a phantom figure, and that his incarnation was not sure. As a result, the early Christians began to doubt the grace and truth of Jesus’ incarnation. Finally, they began to doubt the love of God, who sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ to save men from their sins.

When the early Christians began to doubt the love of God and the grace and truth of Jesus’ incarnation, they lost the absolutes of God. They lost their first love for Jesus. The Ephesian church members worked hard for Jesus. They persevered for the name of Jesus. They did not tolerate wicked men. But they did not examine Gnostics. They were influenced by the Gnostics’ love of the world. As a result, they lost the most important thing. Revelation 2:4 says, “**Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.**” They were good Christians. But they lost the first love for Jesus Christ and they began to love the world. This situation grieved Apostle John and he wrote, not the criticism of Gnostics, but Jesus’ incarnation and Christian fellowship.

Second, Jesus is the Son of God (1-2).

This is the reason John wrote about Jesus, that Jesus is the perfect God and perfect man. Look at verse 1. “**That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.**” This verse is similar to Revelation 1:1-2. It says, “**The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw - that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.**” All these

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verses testify that Jesus is the Son of God. John was one of Jesus' disciples. He lived a common life with Jesus for three years. He saw Jesus with his own eyes. I don't know if he wore glasses or not, but anyway he saw Jesus with his own eyes. John touched Jesus with his hand. One time, John leaned on the breast of Jesus with great confidence, to express that he was not a betrayer, but the most beloved disciple (Jn 13:23). John 1:1-2 summarizes who Jesus is very clearly. It says, **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."** These verses tell us that Jesus is God and Jesus was with God in the beginning. In the last part of 1 John 1:1, **"the Word of life"** is Jesus Christ. Here we learn who Jesus really is.

Firstly, Jesus is the Almighty God. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is the Creator God who made the heavens and the earth. Jesus is the holy God. Isaiah 6:3-4 says, **"And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.' At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke."** When we have God in our hearts, we become children of God and have the fear of God. When we have God in our hearts, he gives us power to overcome the world.

Secondly, Jesus is God who was incarnated as a man. When we know the meaning of Jesus' incarnation, we can realize the love of God. John says in John 1:14: **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."** John said Jesus' incarnation is full of grace and truth. Why is the incarnation of Jesus Christ full of grace and truth? Because it is so. For example, there was a servant of God who dedicated his life to God's work for 35 years without a vacation. His joy was to send his only son for undergraduate study at the University of Chicago, and then to obtain a Ph.D. from Purdue University, ranked number one nationally in analytical chemistry. But after obtaining a Ph.D., his son was not invited as a tenure track professor. He seemed to have become a PHD - a Pizza House Deliverer. Then the father could not thank God and he did not lean on God's leading for his son's future. How proud is fallen man. A fallen man never knows how to humble himself. A fallen man always wants glory and honor, even through his son. Let me tell you another story. There was an exemplary four-star admiral. When he was 16, his parents fought to find a good excuse to divorce. At that time, he was deeply wounded in his young heart. So he lied about his age, saying he was 18, joined the Navy and served for 40 years. From a private, he was promoted until he finally became a four-star admiral. His name is Admiral Mike Boorda.

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Because he participated in the Vietnam War two times, he was awarded two medals. He wore them. He was a commander of a battleship. He could not fight hand-to-hand with enemies like a foot soldier. But his support from the battleship at sea was indeed remarkable, and according to President Clinton, he deserved his medals. His comrades recognized that he deserved those medals. But some journalists wanted to write a controversial article about his medals. The journalists made an appointment to see him. Then his pride of honor was hurt. He committed suicide. He shot himself right on the spot where he wore his medals. His wounds in his young heart were not healed. So when his honor was rejected again, he committed suicide. It is a tragic story. Like him, nobody wants to be a dishonorable man. Everybody wants to be President of the United States or the First Lady. They want honor and glory. There is a young pastor. He is a very humble man. And he served God more than ten years. In the course of serving his student sheep, many of them became doctors. Young doctors experienced such despair and humiliation and sleepless nights, so they want to be called doctors by their fellow men. It is not because they are proud, but because they want to be recognized. But the young servant of God never addressed each of his doctor members as "Doctor." The servant thinks that not calling them, "Doctor" is good, because he lives according to social consensus, where there is no respect. But to the young doctors, their shepherd's attitude looked as though he does not recognize God, so he does not recognize his fellowship doctor members. In this story, we learn how difficult it is to humble ourselves. When we look around the world, fallen man seems to be born to be proud for nothing. But we Christians must recognize God as God and recognize our fellow Christian brethren as Christian brethren and recognize doctors as doctors. People are mostly hurt because of their sin of pride.

But see Jesus! He gave up the glory and the honor and almighty power of God in order to come to this world and dwell among us. We call it "incarnation." How full of grace and truth it is that Jesus came to this world in a human form to save men from their sins. Once, Jesus was on the road with his disciples. As Jesus was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "**Jesus, Master, have pity on us!**" When he saw them, he said, "**Go, show yourselves to the priests.**" And as they went, they were cleansed (Lk 17:11-14). This is Jesus' fellowship with men with leprosy. One day, Jesus was passing by a tax collector's booth. There was Levi, who was pushing his sandwich into his mouth all by himself. Jesus knocked at the door and told him, "**Follow me**" (Lk 5:27). When we read the gospels, Jesus' prayer on the cross is most impressive. When Jesus came to this world and had fellowship with all kinds of men and died on the cross, on the cross, he prayed, "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing**" (Lk 23:34a). In this short

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prayer, we find a triangle relationship. Jesus had fellowship with the Father God. Jesus had fellowship with those who did not know what they were doing. Jesus had fellowship with his mother and many women who supported his ministry. This is divine fellowship. This fellowship is full of grace and truth. It is because Jesus gave up all his glory, honor and power and came down and became a criminal and prayed on the cross, looking down at his mother beneath the cross.

Thirdly, the incarnation of Jesus and Jesus' fellowship with man is so deep and wide that we cannot explain the meaning of "fellowship." So we want to use the Greek word "koinonia." Koinonia, in character, has the meaning of participation. When Jesus came to this world, he was born by the virgin Mary and laid in a manger of a stable. This scene shows us that Jesus participated in the fatalism and oppression of all mankind. When he was born, by laying in a manger of a stable, he bore all men's fatalism and helplessness.

When Jesus began his earthly messianic ministry, mainly he healed the sick and preached to crowds of people. But his focus was on the Twelve disciples. On the road, or at the table of someone's house, he shared divine purpose with them, especially the meaning of his death and resurrection. But his disciples were young and politically ambitious. They did not listen to Jesus' teaching. Once, Jesus talked about his suffering, death and resurrection to his disciples. Immediately, politically-minded disciples only argued on the topic, "Who is the greatest?" But later, through koinonia with Jesus, they became great servants of God. Paul was a promising young man in the community of Judaism. But he was converted on the road to Damascus. The risen Lord Jesus Christ forgave all his sins and appointed him as the apostle for the Gentiles. Then Paul eagerly wanted to participate in the remaining suffering of Jesus. Once Paul preached the gospel of Jesus in Lystra (Ac 14:8-20). Then some gang members came and beat Paul until he looked dead. But his consciousness came back after the assault and he said, "**We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God**" (Ac 14:22). In Paul's heart, he had faith in God. He had faith in Jesus. He also had faith in the work of the Holy Spirit. So he participated in the remaining suffering of Jesus. Once, Paul was in Ephesus. There was a great revival. Many received the gospel of salvation, the grace of forgiveness of sins, eternal life and the kingdom of God as their inheritance. Paul was happy. But his mind was occupied by the purpose of God. It was to evangelize the whole world through the Roman roads. So Paul said in Acts 19:21, "**After I have been there, I must visit Rome also.**" Finally, he went to Rome as an ambassador in chains (Ac 28:20).

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Third, the power of Christian koinonia (3-4).

We can experience the power of Christian koinonia. In order to experience the power of Christian koinonia, we must first have koinonia with God. Second, we must have koinonia with Jesus. Third, we must have koinonia with our fellow Christian brethren. When Jesus finished his earthly messianic ministry, after his resurrection from the dead, he visited his disciples and he ascended into heaven. The disciples had thought that Jesus would be with them forever, but he was ascending. So they were looking at the sky. Then they were rebuked by the angel, **“Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven”** (Ac 1:11).

After hearing this message, Jesus’ disciples and his followers, around 120, became helpless. These bunch of penguins had no more Jesus. But they learned the spirit of koinonia from Jesus. However, they had nothing to do. But there was one thing they could do. They began to pray. Acts 1:12-14 says, **“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.”** They gathered together and prayed earnestly that God’s world salvation purpose would be fulfilled. In the past, Peter did not even look at Bartholomew because he was too weird. John and James thought Peter was a political opponent. Matthew thought that all these guys were ignorant about the concept of economy. In short, they despised each other and each was his own man. But when they prayed in the fellowship of Jesus, something great happened. The Holy Spirit came upon them and changed their old natures. They all became soldiers of Christ. According to Biblical truth, those who obey are those who love, and those who obey the word of God are true brothers and sisters and mothers. Mark 3:31-35 says, **“Then Jesus mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.’ ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”** For example, when a father dies, leaving two children, he is not the dead man’s children. They are God’s children. Likewise, in this world, we have blood

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relationship. But when the heavens come down and glory is revealed, our true brothers and sisters and mothers are those who have even one word of God. This is the true meaning of koinonia. Christian koinonia is based on the word of God. 1 Thessalonians 1:8a says, **“The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia - your faith in God has become known everywhere.”** 1 Corinthians 1:18 says, **“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”** Most of all, we must know that the gospel is the word of life. When we have the word of life we have the most precious thing in the world. When we have the word of life, we can have Christian koinonia.

Christian koinonia is absolute minority. Matthew 18:20 says, **“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”** This verse means that when even two get together in the name of Jesus, then they become a spiritual vessel. And God can use the vessel. There are many people who want to do great work with their own effort. But God does not use men’s wisdom and political intrigues. God only uses Christian koinonia, which is the vessel of the Holy Spirit. The absolute minority can conquer the whole world. Once, the British Empire was morally very low because she became easygoing as a result of exploitation of colonial peoples. Then seven students at Cambridge University prayed in Christian koinonia. We call them the “Cambridge Seven.” Through them, the British Empire was mysteriously restored from moral corruption. Here we learn that when we love God, we not only love others, but also we can have a common goal for which we can give our lives. Last Friday it was raining heavily. But our Young Missionaries began to repair one of our fellow member’s roof. Nobody told them to repair the member’s roof. But they went, and in the rain, put in insulation and made a new roof. It seemed to be a small matter. But those who built the new roof of one of our members are all those who have koinonia with God. They are true friends with God. They are indeed the stewards of God’s world. Christian koinonia produces stewardship, a sense of responsibility. Above all, Christian koinonia destroys the selfishness of fallen man.

Fourth, Christian lifestyle (5-9).

There are two requirements to live a Christian lifestyle. First, they must live in the light. As we know well, there is light and there is darkness. Many people live a double life, sometimes they live in the light, sometimes in the darkness. Therefore, the responsibility of the Christian is to guide those who are living in the darkness to the marvelous light of Jesus. 1 Peter 2:9 says, **“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may**

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declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

In this generation, people do not talk about why something happened or what caused an event to happen. As a result, the darkness overwhelms the minds of people who do not know “why?” We must know that darkness stands for the chaos of life without God. As we know well, 100 percent of those who live in darkness crave for immoral lives. And immoral lives make people’s souls very sick. These days unlimited human freedom has become the social consensus of this country. But human freedom makes people very selfish. Selfishness is connected with lovelessness.

Next, Christians’ lifestyle should be the life of repentance. Look at verses 8-9. **“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”** These days, most people think that they have no concept of sin because their consciences have been seared by a hot iron and they have become numb like a leper and don’t feel sin. Even if they don’t feel a prick of conscience or sensitivity toward sin in their minds, they should not deceive themselves by thinking they are righteous. These days many witches help young people to sear their conscience and make their guilty feeling numb. We cannot say they are good counselors. They are responsible for the blood of those whom they counsel. On the other hand, if we confess our sins, God will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Look at verse 9. **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”**

May God richly bless you and help you to grow up to be a member of Christian koinonia. We must remember Christian koinonia first begins with God and his Son Jesus Christ and finally, with his wife.