

Finding *Renewal* in the Love of God

Unit 4: Discovering Renewal by Committing to Obedience

Study Questions with Answers

Some background: In the Greek language, as in ours, the word “fellowship” means simply “things in common.”

A thought to start: As declared in its opening paragraphs, 1 John invites its readers into the fellowship of a shared life. Though the recipients are children of God who possess the very nature of God by His Spirit, the letter encourages them to live up to their calling—to *celebrate* the fellowship and to fully utilize the gift they have received. The life they possess is no less than the life of God Himself, the one He shares with the Son. By nature, this fellowship—sharing the very life of the Father and the Son—demands a response. If we truly share the life, if we claim its benefits and its associations, it stands to reason that we must also share in its lifestyle. God is light; in Him there is *no darkness at all*. We have an advocate with this God—Jesus Christ, *the righteous*.

Using the New American Standard text, respond to the following questions:

1. Read 1.6-10. What are three different false claims that those who say that they possess fellowship with God and Christ might make regarding sin?
 - a. *Saying that we share in God’s life, but we do not live a life of sin*
 - b. *Saying that we have no sin*
 - c. *Saying that we have never sinned.*
2. In this same text, what are two testimonies someone might make that would result in that person remaining in fellowship with God? What does God do in response to these testimonies that makes this fellowship possible (see also 2.1-2)?
 - a. *A life lived in the light testifies that we share in Jesus’ life*
 - b. *Confessing our sins testifies that we believe and we know ourselves as people in need of God’s grace.*
3. In verse 10, why do you think that the claim that I have never sinned would make me guilty of calling God a liar?

Since God sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins, claiming that we have never sinned represents us testifying against God that we sin; we are calling Him a liar.
4. What is the proof a believer presents as evidence that she shares the life of God (see 2.3-6)? What is the opposite testimony one might make?
 - a. *Keeping His commandments; living like Jesus lived.*
 - b. *It fits then that those who do not keep His commandments and live as Jesus lived, do not know Him. He is a liar (v.4).*

5. John writes, “Anyone who does keep His word, in such a one God’s love truly reaches perfection.” What does *love* for one’s brothers and sisters in Christ have to do with keeping God’s commandments?

Even the 10 commandments can be divided into those that indicate our love for God and those that indicate our love for our brothers. Thus, Jesus could answer that two commandments were more important than all the rest: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul and to love your neighbor as yourself. In these all the law and the prophets are summed up. In the upper room, Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you.” As children of God and “siblings” of Jesus, we must bear a family resemblance with God the Father and Jesus the Son. Both LOVED and GAVE. We must model them. John reminds his readers that one cannot keep the commandments of God without loving his/her brothers.

6. What is Jesus’ commandment to which John often refers? Go back to John 14-16 to locate and read this command in its original context. **To love one another as He loved His disciples (his spiritual family).**

7. Read 2.12-14. In this brief poem, John directs encouragement to the various groups of believers. Take note of the tenses he uses in this piece. He says he *is writing...because....* What tense does he use for the reasons he is writing to these groups? Write the reasons with the tenses below. For example, “I *am writing* to you, children, because your sins *have been forgiven.*”

For the most part the verbs in this poem are *past*. He is writing to these recipients because of things they ***have done***—including having received forgiveness, having come to know God the Father and His Son, having overcome the Evil One. Only in verse 14 does he say that he writes to the young people because they *are strong*; because God’s word *remains in them*.

What do you note about the time element in the reasons for John’s writing? What encouragement is there in these words, written to these groups?

I think this may be to encourage the young that though they have miles to go in their Christian walk, they have *already overcome the Evil One* (verse 13) and they have the strength to continue doing so. It is interesting to me that all the tenses surrounding the world are present tense. The world does not have a future. It and everything in it are “passing away” (see v. 17).

8. What other *love* might one choose than the one John exhorts his readers to choose (2.15-17)? What are the results one might expect from choosing either of the two different lifestyles? **In its context a person will either love others (with the sacrificial love of Christ) and thus show her love for the Lord (2.9-11), or she will love the world. Loving the world indicates that there is no love of the Father in that person (15). This type life is perishing, whereas the Life that is in Christ “lives forever.”**

9. Read 3.1-2. Paraphrase this text. Okay, I shouldn't do this because everyone will have a good one, but this is my paraphrase (today):
 Have you noticed the amazing love the Father poured out all over us when he called us His children? You know, that is what we really are—God's *children!* Of course, the world doesn't recognize us as such; why, the world didn't even recognize *Him!* Oh, my friends, (can you imagine?) *we already are God's children;* and we don't even know what else He has planned for us because He hasn't yet told us that part! But this we know: When He comes we will be just like He is; the fact that we will see Him in *all His glory* at that time will be the evidence that we are like Him. Wow!
10. When is it that we will be *like Him?* When He comes. There is a question about whether this means that we will be changed at that moment to be like Him or whether we will already be like Him. I rather think the answer is yes, and... The Bible teaches us that we are God's children, born of Him, indwelt by the Spirit, and in the process of being changed day by day into the image of Christ. All that is in this world. The gospels also teach us that what we can "see" changes who we are. I think we will be like Him already, but that when we truly "see" Him for who he truly is, we will become exactly like Him.
11. Read 3.3-10. From this text, identify as many motivations as you can for a Christian to choose a lifestyle that resembles the life of the Son. Put a star by the one which motivates you the most. Remember there may be more than I write.
- a. A life in Christ and hope in Him is an ingredient in keeping us pure (3).
 - b. A life in Christ is a life away from sin (5-6).
 - c. Living like Christ indicates that I am upright, just as He is (7).
 - d. When we live with Christ, we participate in His undoing of the devil's work (this one is my favorite motivation).**
 - e. God's seed in me keeps me from the path of sin.
 - f. A life in Christ means that I am a child of God and *not a child of Satan.*
12. Using the same text, make a list of goals for yourself to spur you on toward growing in your own pursuit of living like a child of God.
13. What is the message/command which John calls the one you have heard from the beginning (see 4.11-24)? Though we will discuss this in detail for lesson 5, write what you think might be the relationship between this commandment and all the rest?
- a. To love one another
 - b. See my response to question # 5