

Fellowship That Guides Our Walk I John 1:1-7

Our series on fellowship brings us to **I John 1:1-7**.

Everything has a source, a starting point of its origin, existence or place from which it derives.

The sun is our source of energy.

A river or stream has a source.

A book, movie, document or letter has a beginning.

I would guess that we all read a book from the beginning. It's difficult to know what's happening in a movie if we come into it part way through.

Who is that character? How did they get into that mess?

If you turn on the Tiger's game in the fourth inning, you may wonder about the score.

If we want to get the full picture of the book, the movie or the game, we need to be there in the beginning.

Did you know that fellowship has a beginning point, a source of origin? We read about it in our text for today. We learn in these opening verses that fellowship is established by Christ's incarnation.

I. FELLOWSHIP IS ESTABLISHED BY CHRIST'S INCARNATION – vv. 1-4

John begins very similarly to how he started his gospel.

John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Here we read **“That which was from the beginning.”**

You may be wondering what **“beginning”** John is talking about. **Is he referring to the beginning of time, the beginning of his epistle or something else?**

Let's clear up that John is not talking about the beginning of God. God has always been in existence. While I said a moment ago that everything has an origin, that does not mean God. The Bible tells us He was, He is, He always will be. There is nothing that began God. He has always existed.

In His book on *Basic Theology*, Charles Ryrie

writes **“That God exists endlessly. His existence extends endlessly backward and forward (from our viewpoint of time) without any interruption or limitation caused by succession of events.”**

Psalm 90:2 “From everlasting to everlasting You are God.”

Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God...” infers that God was in existence before the worlds came into existence.

Genesis 21:33 says that Abraham **“called on the name of the Lord, the Eternal God”** which, in its original form means the God of eternity. He has always existed and will never cease to exist.

We can say the same about Jesus Christ. From **John 1:1** we learn that the Word, who is Jesus Christ, was in the beginning with God and is in fact God.

Christ has always existed. But John speaks about the tangible evidence of His existence, both in His deity and in His humanity.

A. The Evidence Is Tangible – v. 1

“That which was from the beginning” certainly can refer to the eternal existence of Jesus, but also points to the beginning of His ministry and the proclamation of the Gospel message by Him, a message that is unchanging. The gospel has always been the same. One of the reasons John writes is to combat a growing heresy in the early church. A form of Gnosticism had emerged that denied both the full deity and humanity of Jesus. At its core, Gnosticism teaches that matter is evil and therefore, Jesus couldn't be human otherwise He too would be evil and if He was evil, because He was matter then He couldn't be God. So John lays out some tangible evidence for His humanity.

John MacArthur writes that **“with a simple opening statement John establishes that the gospel message concerning the Word of Life is permanent and unalterable.”**

Notice the compelling evidence that is given by John about Jesus as human.

1. The evidence of hearing Jesus

In 1967 Gladys Knight and the Pips released a hit single “I Heard it Through the Grapevine”. The grapevine is how a lot of false rumors get started. It’s like that parlor game you may have played where one person whispers a story in the ear of the next person who repeats it to the next person and so on around the room. The last person then repeats the story to see how it compares to the original. Generally, and especially when there are a lot of people playing the game, the end story has little similarity to the original.

Not so with what John says. He is telling us that this is no grapevine, no tabloid news, no second or third hand information. He says that he was there and heard it firsthand.

He was there when Jesus taught parables like the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son.

He was there when Jesus taught sermons like the one in [Matthew 5-7](#), which we call the Sermon on the Mount.

He was there when Jesus taught the disciples privately without the crowds present. They were lessons like the importance of serving each other from [John 12](#) when He washed their feet. Or the lessons about Him being the gate and the good shepherd in [John 10](#).

What would it have been like to hear Jesus speak every day as the disciples were privileged to hear? John had firsthand experience.

When John says he heard, the word is in the perfect tense, meaning it was something that happened in the past that continued to have impact in his life in the present. John is saying that he didn’t just hear Jesus one time, but that he heard Him throughout His ministry on earth.

[John 20:30-31](#)

[John 21:24-25](#)

John wrote this epistle 60 years after Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection and ascension and he could still vividly remember what he heard Jesus teach.

A second means of compelling evidence is what he saw.

2. The evidence of seeing Jesus

This is also in the perfect tense referring to something in the past with ongoing impact in the present. Notice that John adds that he saw with his eyes. This makes it clear that it was a physical experience. It wasn’t a dream or a vision. It wasn’t his mind playing tricks on him making him think he saw something that wasn’t really there, much like a man might see a mirage out in the middle of the desert. It wasn’t a figment of his imagination. Jesus wasn’t a ghostly presence. He was a real person and John saw Him firsthand as they journeyed together from place to place during His ministry on earth. Jesus was as visible to him as the nose on his face.

After Jesus taught about being the only Way, the only Truth and the only Life in order to come to the Father, Phillip asked Jesus to show him the Father. Jesus told him that if he had seen Him, he had seen the Father. He was the visible manifestation of God. He made God known.

[As I have been working with the insurance company regarding David’s car, they keep telling me that the damage estimate is based on what is visible, what they can see, that there is likely more damage that can’t be seen and won’t be known until it is torn apart.](#)

With His incarnation, Jesus revealed what was once not visible – God Himself. If anyone has seen Him, they have seen the Father.

To reinforce the reality that he had seen Jesus, that Jesus was a real person, John gives a third evidence. He looked at Jesus.

3. The evidence of looking at Jesus

You might think this is a redundant statement to what he just said about seeing Jesus, but it in fact is more than just merely glancing at someone or something like seeing a sunset or seeing a deer out in the field or seeing a concert. We give a head glance over our left shoulder before we change

lanes. A pitcher will give a glance over to first base to get an idea if the base runner is giving any clues of attempting to steal second base.

John doesn't mean he's just glancing over at Jesus. The word carries the idea of a long, searching gaze. I like to think of it as looking at and pondering it or giving careful thought about it.

Jesus used the word when he asked the crowd what they came out to see in the desert when they went to listen to John the Baptist.

It's used of the women who followed the body of Jesus, who saw where He was buried.

It's the word used in **John 1:14** where it says we **"beheld His glory"**.

Yes, the disciples had been an eyewitness of the miracles Jesus performed – feeding thousands, healing the sick, the lame, the deaf, the blind, the demon possessed, but even more so they watched him intently. They watched how He lived.

Jesus asked the famous question of his disciples, one we all have to answer. Who do men say that I am? Speaking for the group, Peter said He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, thus affirming His deity, that He was not only man but also God. They saw who He was and were convinced He was God in the flesh. It was tangible evidence.

John provides us with one more tangible piece of evidence to support that Jesus is the Word of Life.

4. The evidence of touching Jesus

Again, John uses the physical senses to support the evidence when he says that they touched Him with their hands. The word means to feel after or to grope much as a blind man will grope to feel his way around.

It's the same word Jesus used when He invited the disciples to touch Him after His resurrection to dispel their fear when they thought they were seeing a ghost.

Later He did the same with Thomas who doubted that Jesus had risen from the dead.

"If you don't believe it's Me in the flesh, then go ahead and touch Me and you will see that I'm real."

It's like when someone pinches themselves to make sure that what they are seeing isn't just a dream.

John does not give secondhand information, but Gives personal physical, tangible evidence for Jesus. He heard Him, saw Him, and touched Him. This Jesus, this Word of Life is the one he was proclaiming, making Him known, revealing Him.

Where first, we see that the evidence is tangible, we next see the evidence is transmitted.

B. The Evidence Is Transmitted – v. 2

John begins by stating that the **"life appeared"**. This is in reference to Jesus who as God became man. He wasn't one or the other. He didn't set aside being God to become man. And neither did He set aside being man when He performed His miracles. He did not give up His deity to become man, He merely set aside His glory, which for a brief time, was revealed on the Mt. of Transfiguration.

Philippians 2:5-8

Jesus also said of Himself in **John 14:6** that He is **"the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through Him."**

Earlier He had declared to Martha in **John 11:25** that He was **"the resurrection and the life."** He not only is the living one who rose from the dead, He is also the giver and sustainer of life – not just physical life in the sense of providing every breath we take and keeping us alive (as my college theology professor would say, 'if He was to stop thinking about you for a millisecond, you would cease to exist), but more importantly He gives spiritual life, everlasting life for those who believe on Him.

John 3:16

I John 5:11-13

John 5:26

In this verse, John has in view the incarnation of Jesus, that God the Son became the Son of man and lived here on earth for a time. This life was

manifested or revealed. It can also mean to shine or bring light to or to show plainly. The one who is life is being revealed and is the eternal life He gives.

John says that this One who is called the Word of life was with the Father (**John 1:1**). He is the One who has appeared to us. John gives evidence of Jesus.

In **verses 3-4**, the evidence is tested.

C. The Evidence Is Tested – vv. 3-4

He first says that it is good news.

1. It Is Good News – v. 3

Herein lies the reason for John's proclamation of the Life, Jesus. The reason is so his audience would have fellowship with he and the other disciples, just as their fellowship was with the Father and the Son. He wrote to warn them about false teaching that could lead them away from the truth and from fellowship with them. His eyewitness account of the incarnate Christ would counter the false teachers who denied that reality.

As we have seen in our previous studies on fellowship, it is the spiritual union of believers with Christ. When a person accepts Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit grafts that person into the body of Christ with all the other believers. A great picture of this is seen in the illustration Jesus gives in **John 15**.

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing."

We have a pile of dead branches in the back because they have been removed from the source of their life. Jesus, who is life, gives us life in Him and we are joined with others who have received life.

Another analogy is one Paul uses to speak of fellowship. We discussed this a couple weeks ago in relationship to the body being one with many members.

I Corinthians 12:12 "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its

parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ."

Ultimately, fellowship is with the Father and the Son. We cannot have fellowship with each other, unless and until we have fellowship with God. He is the source of fellowship. John was proclaiming the gospel so that others could have fellowship with the Father and with the Son. And when we have that kind of fellowship, then we are able to have fellowship with other believers.

Another example that Paul uses is the union between the head and the body, which speaks to Christ as the head and we are the body.

Colossians 1:18 "He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy."

So it's good news that we have this relationship with Christ because without Him we could not have fellowship with the Father, nor could we truly be in fellowship with one another. We would be like two porcupines trying to stay warm together but in the end only having to separate because we keep poking each other. If we are in right fellowship with Christ, we will be in right fellowship with each member in the body of Christ.

So John was declaring the good news of the truth of Christ. This truth stresses the life of Christ in us that we can be partakers of the divine nature as we read in **II Corinthians 5:17** where we have become a new creation when we are saved.

John Philips writes "The eternal life, which was inherent in the Christ, is now inherited by the Christian. And that inheritance makes it possible for us to have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Moreover, as we cultivate that fellowship, the life and likeness of Christ in us becomes evident to those around us."

This means that the closer we are in fellowship with the Lord, the more evident that will be to others.

Moses had been up on the mountain for 40 days in God's presence receiving the commandments from

God. When he came down, his face reflected the radiance of God and others saw it. He gave evidence that he had been with God.

In 1858, David Livingstone returned to Africa to find the source of the Nile River. He reached the southern end of Lake Tanganyika in 1867 and then moved on the interior of Africa before dropping out of sight. Two years later, the *New York Herald* sent Henry Stanley on an expedition to find the famous explorer. After many hardships, Stanley found Livingstone in 1871 and remained with the missionary-explorer until 1872. The months with Livingstone had a significant impact on Stanley. In his own words he writes: “In 1871 I went to him as prejudiced as the biggest atheist in London. To a reporter and correspondent such as I, who had only to deal with wars, mass meetings, and political gatherings, sentimental matters were entirely out of my province. But there came for me a long time of reflection. I was out there away from a worldly world. I saw this solitary old man there, and asked myself, ‘How on earth does he stop here – is he cracked, or what? What is it that inspires him?’ For months after we met I simply found myself listening to him, wondering at the old man carrying out all that was said in the Bible – ‘Leave all things and follow Me!’ But little by little his sympathy for others became contagious; my sympathy was aroused, seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness, and how he went quietly about his business. I was converted by him, although he had not tried to do it.”

Stanley had witnessed the life of Christ being lived out in Livingstone and was changed by what he saw. We are to live out the life of Christ in us so that in seeing us, others will see the fellowship we have in Him and with Him and noting a difference may be compelled as Stanley to consider that fellowship absent in their own lives and desire to know more, perhaps even to know Christ. That is the good news we proclaim.

But remember, there are all kinds of confusing examples, people who say one thing and then live another. The message we proclaim must be the

message we live. We must demonstrate fellowship with the Father, with the Son and with each other. Our example is the test of the good news we proclaim.

John also says it’s glad news.

2. It is glad news

“We write this to make our joy complete.”

Joy is different from happiness. Happiness depends on what happens around us or to us and is circumstantial. In essence, we create our own happiness. Joy, on the other hand, is something we experience in spite of our circumstances.

James 1:2 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.”

Why? Because of the character traits of faith, perseverance and maturity that are being developed in us during those trials.

Joy is closely related to grace and comes from the same root word. Grace means gift. We have joy because of God’s grace. When we experience joy the next step is to express it in some way through praise of some kind whether in word or action. David was filled with joy when the Ark was being brought to Jerusalem and expressed it by dancing before the Lord.

Paul and Silas were filled with joy in prison and expressed it in singing.

Peter talks about a joy that is inexpressible because even though we haven’t seen Christ, we love Him.

Being joyful is a choice. If we value God’s presence, His promises and His work in our lives we will have joy. When we yield to the Holy Spirit’s work in us, He develops the fruit of joy that is evident. When we trust God, He fills us with hope and joy (**Romans 15:13**). Joy can’t be found in this fallen world because according to our text, it is only fellowship with God that makes joy complete.

Where happiness is something we can manufacture, joy is something that only the Spirit of God can develop in us (**Galatians 5:22**).

The apostles had such a heart for the body of Christ, their joy was wrapped up in their spiritual well-being. When they were in fellowship with the Father, the Son and each other, the apostles experienced complete joy. John writes **“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” (III John 4)**

Warren Wiersbe states **“Fellowship is Christ’s answer to loneliness. Joy is the answer to the emptiness and hollowness of life.”**

Without Christ there will be no fellowship or joy. True joy can only be complete in Jesus Christ.

Martin Lloyd-Jones states **“Joy is deep and profound, and affects the whole being and personality regardless of circumstances.”**

What John writes about is the truth concerning God’s Son that he and the other apostles had witnessed firsthand. This wasn’t hearsay or circumstantial. They had seen Him with their own two eyes. They had heard Him with their own ears. They had touched Him with their own two hands. He was not a metaphysical emanation or the figment of an overactive imagination. And in their personal experience could proclaim the gospel of this Word of life – a message that brings fellowship and joy and is only found in Christ. Fellowship is established by Christ’s incarnation. If He didn’t come as God in human body, we can’t have fellowship with Him or one another.

In **verses 5-7** we see that fellowship is enjoyed by God’s illumination.

II. FELLOWSHIP IS ENJOYED BY GOD’S ILLUMINATION – vv. 5-7

What John is going to say isn’t just his opinion, it is a declaration, something that is based on fact. It is a message they had heard from Christ Himself and was declaring/proclaiming it to his audience.

“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”

Light represents what is good, true, and holy.

Darkness represents the opposite, what is evil and false.

John 3:19-21

As light, God exposes our sinfulness, our impurity.

Those who do wrong, hate the light. If a person walks in darkness, he is hiding from the light.

Darkness can never overcome the light, it can never drive out the light, but as soon as you turn on a light darkness is driven out. Remember that the very first thing created was light. When God who is light said **“let there be light.”** Darkness was dispelled because the power of the light overcame it. In that sense then, physical light bears the image of its Creator.

He was the pillar of light at night that led the Israelites in the wilderness after their exodus.

In the new heaven and new earth there will be no need for light for the light of God, His glory will be our light (**Isaiah 60:19-20**).

John says true light came into the world (**Jn 1:4-9**)

But sadly, men choose to walk in darkness rather than light. John says if we say we have fellowship with God and yet walk or live or conduct ourselves in darkness or according to the world, we are liars and the truth is not in us. But if we walk, or live or conduct ourselves according to the light, if our conduct is patterned after the character of God, then we have fellowship with one another because we are in fellowship with God who is the light.

John 1:4 says the light that came into the world, referring to Jesus Christ gives us life. John says in our text that the blood of Christ purifies us from all our sin if we are walking in darkness.

There are only two lifestyles: light and darkness, right living or wrong living. We can walk after the light or walk after the darkness. Because God is light, the believer can’t truly say he is living in fellowship with God if he is living in sin. Walking in the light speaks of being open and responsive to where the light will lead us, what God will reveal needs to be changed in us. When something is revealed to us that is from living according to darkness **verses 8-10** give us the remedy – confess because the cleansing blood of Christ forgives us. To live in the light is to have fellowship with God and with one another. **Are you in fellowship?**