

GOD

Our Fellowship with God

As God's children, we can live power-filled lives that are more than abundant. In order for us to do this, though, we must be in fellowship with God, our heavenly Father. We'll take a look at what it means to have fellowship with God, as well as some of the many benefits and blessings that will enrich our lives as a result.

We can learn a lot about fellowship with God in the Epistle of I John.

I John

1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ.

The word "fellowship" is from the Greek word *koinōnia*. Although it is usually translated "fellowship", this word is also rendered "communication", "communion", and even "contribution" and "distribution". If you were to do a word study and consider all of its usages in their contexts, you would find that *koinōnia*, fellowship, is more than just participation or a partnership. Fellowship is a full sharing, holding nothing back; a complete, open communication that works in both directions.

Verse 3 tells us that we can have fellowship with other believers as well as with God (our Father when we are born again), and with Jesus Christ. The verse begins "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship..." What did they "see" and "hear" that was declared so the reader could have this fellowship? Look at verse 1:

1:1 That which was from the beginning (*the start of the Grace Administration*), which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon (*gazed upon*), and our hands have handled, of (*concerning*) the word of life;

"The Word of life" is a figure of speech emphasizing "life". Not only were we made spiritually alive when we believed God's Word, but the Word of God provides us with "all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3). So, from verse 3, when the Word of life is made known, it then becomes available to have fellowship, full sharing and all that it implies, not only with other believers but with God and with Jesus Christ. Surely, we want to have fellowship with God, our heavenly Father!

We can only have fellowship, that full sharing and completely open communication with God, if we are His children. To have fellowship with God, we must first be born again of His spirit, with spiritual seed, that gift of holy spirit within. We already know how God made this available through His great grace. Our being children of God, biblically referred to as "sonship", is an absolute pre-requisite to being able to have fellowship with Him.

We know from Colossians 1:27 that when we are born again, it is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Our standing as sons and daughters of God never changes: we will always be God’s children, brothers and sisters of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But even though once we are born again, we are always God’s children, members of His family, we may not always enjoy fellowship with Him, or with other members of the household. Our fellowship, our state at any given time, may fluctuate.

In order to better understand this, consider an earthly family. No matter what a child in that family does, they are always a member of that family. But, the fellowship - the full sharing, the open communication, and all its benefits - between that child and their father depends on the child’s behavior. If the child is behaving properly, fellowship can be sweet. But, if the child disobeys, that fellowship is broken. Often when this happens, condemnation or even resentment can set in, sometimes on the part of not only the child but the father. Then the quality of life, the sharing and the benefits and communication, suffers, and is not restored until eventually the child and father both reestablish fellowship with one another. This may involve something as simple as an apology, or may involve works to remedy the wrong; and at times fellowship may not even be fully restored.

Fellowship with God, our heavenly Father, is similar in that if we sin, we have broken fellowship with Him and we cannot receive all the benefits we enjoyed while we were in fellowship. But God is so much bigger than any earthly father. When we sin, God doesn’t ever change in His great love for us. As it says in Psalm 103:8, “The Lord *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger (*longsuffering*), and plenteous in mercy.” Verse 14 of the same Psalm says “For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust.”

When we sin, our fellowship with our heavenly Father is broken, but it is we, His children, who are the ones who may experience condemnation or resentment. When we are out of fellowship, we cannot receive the benefits and blessings that God has made available to us and still wants to give us because of His grace and mercy. But God made it so simple for us to get back into fellowship with Him. Look at I John 1:9:

I John

1:9 If we confess our sins (*our broken fellowship*), he (*God*) is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The way to get back into fellowship with God and once again enjoy His blessings is simply to confess our broken fellowship to Him (not to another person!): we just acknowledge that we sinned and move on. God then forgives us, and our fellowship with Him is restored.

The moment a person gets born again of God’s spirit, that person receives sonship and is made righteous before God. At that moment, that person begins life as a member of God’s family with perfect fellowship with their heavenly Father. But, that state of being in fellowship with God depends on the person’s actions. Even though we never can lose our righteousness in God’s eyes (it’s one of our five “sonship rights”), our actions may not always be righteous, and we can then break fellowship.

So, how does one maintain fellowship with God to avoid breaking it? Let's back up a bit in I John Chapter 1 and begin reading in verse 5:

1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do (*practice*) not the truth:

Here we see that God is light. There is no darkness in him: God is good always. If we sin, we are "walking in darkness" and our fellowship with Him is broken.

1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another (*we and God have fellowship with each other*), and the blood of Jesus Christ (*a figure of speech for his giving of his life*) his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

So, to have fellowship with God, we need to "walk in light as he is in the light". How do we do this? We do this by renewing our minds to God's Word. Look at Romans 12:2:

Romans

12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

We maintain fellowship with God as we renew our minds – put God's Word on in our minds and act accordingly. Then we are "walking in the light".

Let's look at a couple other verses that show us more about renewing our minds:

Colossians

3:16 Let the word of (*pertaining to*) Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

We should let God's Word "dwell" in us; put the Word on in our minds. Notice that we don't only think God's Word, but we do. Part of renewing our minds is acting accordingly.

Philippians

2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

We are to "put on the mind of Christ". Jesus Christ lived his earthly life in perfect fellowship with God, his Father. He put God's Word on in his mind and then took action on it. If we renew our minds and put on the mind of Christ, we have fellowship with God. Biblically, when a person has fellowship with God, with the same mind-set that was in Christ Jesus, they are referred to as being "in Christ".

To see an example where “in Christ” is used for being in fellowship, let’s read II Corinthians 5:17:

II Corinthians

5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

If you are “in Christ” you are in fellowship with God. Because you have renewed your mind, “old things”, the old thoughts, desires, longings, and temptations, have disappeared. In their place, “all things are become new” – your thoughts, from renewing your mind, are “new”. The word “new” here means not just something after the old, but “different”. Our thoughts, now on God’s Word, are different from the thoughts we had before.

5:18 And all things (*all the new thoughts*) are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

Here we see a great connection between being in fellowship with God and enjoying our “sonship rights”. When we are in fellowship with God (“in Christ”) we have God’s Word in our minds, and we can claim and operate the ministry of reconciliation, one of our five rights as God’s children given to us by God’s grace when we got born again. When we’re in fellowship we can hold forth God’s Word with results, and reconcile others to God.

Let’s consider some of the other benefits and blessings we receive when we have fellowship with God, our heavenly Father.

Ephesians

1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings. When we are in fellowship with Him (in Christ) we can enjoy them.

When we are in fellowship with God, we aren’t condemning ourselves.

Romans

8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.
(*The rest of the verse is not found in 6 of the seven Critical Greek Manuscripts or in the Aramaic texts, so should be omitted*)

We don’t condemn ourselves for past failures or broken fellowship. We put the past behind. As it says in Philippians 3:13, “...*this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.”

I John

3:21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God.

When we aren't condemning ourselves, we have confidence, or boldness, and can boldly go to God our Father with our requests and needs. Hebrews 4:16 says that we can "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

When we are in fellowship with God, we can get our prayers answered. We see this also in I John 5:14-15:

5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in (*toward*) him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

5:15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

When we are in fellowship with God, we will manifest fruit in our lives. In John 15:5, Jesus Christ said: "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." In our Grace Administration, when we are in Christ, we can effectively operate nine manifestations of holy spirit, and as a result we will experience the fruit of the spirit as spelled out in Galatians 5:22 and 23: love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness (kindness), goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance (self control).

Let's just consider two of the fruit of the spirit to see how our enjoying them relates to our being in fellowship. I John Chapter 1, verse 4 immediately follows the verse we looked at regarding how to have fellowship with God:

1:4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Our fullness of joy is contingent upon our fellowship with God. Psalm 16:11 says "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fullness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures forevermore." We can have fullness of joy in God's presence when we are in fellowship with Him.

The second fruit of the spirit we'll consider is peace:

Philippians

4:6 Be careful (*anxious*) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

4:7 And the peace of God (*the peace which comes from God*), which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The word "through" in verse 7 should be "in" – when we are "in Christ," in fellowship, we can have peace.

Finally, when we maintain fellowship with God, we can have power in our day by day living. We can effectively operate the manifestations of holy spirit. Ephesians 1:19 tells us of

“the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe”. John 14:12 tells us that we can do the works of Jesus Christ and greater. The only way we can do all this is to be in fellowship with God.

Ephesians 6:10 tells us to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” The words “in the Lord” signify not just fellowship with God (“in Christ”) but standing faithfully in the household. When we stand faithfully, in fellowship not only with God but with other believers, we can truly be strong in the power of God’s might.

And, when we are in fellowship (in Christ) and operate God’s power, we can triumph. Look at II Corinthians 2:14:

II Corinthians

2:14 Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

This also brings us back to our being witnesses for God with the ministry of reconciliation. When we are in fellowship with Him, God is made known by us – by our words and by our actions.

So, we’ve seen that there are many great blessings and benefits to being in fellowship with God, our heavenly Father.

- Dr. Rick Batt