

1 John 1:1-10

Fellowship & Confession

Learning Objective

- Authentic fellowship with God and others can only happen when one is living “in the light” through genuine confession.

Introducing 1 John

Pray for your time together as a group.

Read Out Loud: 1 John 1 (NIV)

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. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 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. ⁴ We write this to make our joy complete.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

Background Information

There is controversy over whether the author was John, the apostle and one of the twelve disciples, or if he was John, a disciple of the apostle John. 1 John is written in the later half of the first century to a church in Asia Minor. It addressed the specific problem in this church community where people were believing in false teaching, namely that Jesus wasn't the Messiah, He wasn't the Son of God, and He didn't come in the flesh (vs. 2:22; 4:2; 5:1-5).

Information taken from: The Epistles of John by I. Howard Marshall; Michigan: The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 1978.

? Optional: What about this passage stood out to you?

Leader's Note: This question gives your group the opportunity to explore their own ideas before leading them to specific discussion. Caution: Do not let this turn into a debate about personal understandings—keep it more on the “observation” level.

? Optional: How does the author, John, establish his credibility, and why might that be important?

Possible Answer: He reminds his readers that he has actually heard and seen Jesus in the flesh, as a defense to those who are promoting false teachings. He also mentions this so that “you also may have fellowship with us” (vs. 3). He testifies that they have heard, seen, looked and touched Jesus, and therefore proclaim Him as the Word of life.

True Life

? Why does John refer to Jesus as the Word of life in verses 1 and 2? How is this linked to John calling Jesus “life appeared” in verse 2?

Possible Answers: Jesus was there at the beginning with God. As the trinity, He was the part of all life. All true life comes from Him. (See also John 1:1-4.)

? What if-then statements can we pull out of vv. 6-10?

Leader’s Note: You may want to give your group members a few minutes to first fill in the chart before sharing out loud.

	IF...	THEN...
Verse 6		
Verse 7		
Verse 8		
Verse 9		
Verse 10		

Possible Answers:

vs. 6 IF we claim to follow Christ, but are in darkness, THEN we lie and do not live in the truth.

vs. 7 IF we walk in the light, THEN we have fellowship with one another and are purified by Christ’s blood.

vs. 8 IF we claim to be without sin, THEN we deceive ourselves.

vs. 9 IF we confess our sins, THEN Christ will forgive and purify us.

vs. 10 IF we claim to have not sinned, THEN we make Christ to be a liar and He is not in us.

? How do these if-then statements cause us to examine ourselves? How have you seen this cause and effect chain play out in your walk with God?

Possible Answers: It causes us to see if any of them are true about ourselves. Are we claiming to be without sin? Are we walking in the light? Then we should be experiencing true fellowship.

? How is John making his joy complete? How can we make our joy complete?

Possible Answers: By sharing the truth of the Gospel and by doing so, creating genuine fellowship with other believers. We can follow in John's example by sharing who Jesus is with others and building relationships grounded in that truth.

True Fellowship

Optional Transition: Throughout this section, John mentions the term 'fellowship' several times.

? Where have you heard the term "fellowship" before? What does the term "fellowship" actually mean?

Possible Answers: "Fellowship" time at church, the "Fellowship of the Ring," etc. According to Merriam Webster: 1. Companionship, company. 2. A community of interest, activity, feeling, or experience.

Leader's Note: Depending on your group, you may wish to share: At Hope, we often substitute the word "community" for Christian "fellowship," meaning people who lift up the Gospel in each other's lives, journey together through joy and struggle, and live authentically with one another.

? What is the connection between the mention of 'fellowship' in vs. 3 and vv. 6-7?

Possible Answers: If we have fellowship with Christ, we have fellowship with each other—because of living in the life, light, and truth of Jesus.

? We often hear fellowship in references to relationship with other believers, but what does fellowship with Christ look like practically?

Possible Answers: Spending intentional time with Him, coming before Him without shame or fear in showing our true selves (and confessing where we've fallen short of His standards).

? In vv. 5-7, John mentions that God is light and that we need to be in the light. What does it mean to walk in the light?

Possible Answer: It's another way of talking about faith in Christ. We live in the light of who Jesus is and what He's done for us. It also means we confess our sins, and that Christ will forgive and cleanse us.

? What do vv. 8-10 tell us about walking in the light?

Possible Answers: It means we can't lie about our sins, but instead have to honestly confess them, and as we do that, we are forgiven and cleansed.

? What connection is there between confessing our sins and having fellowship with one another?

Possible Answers: Being real and honest with one another will build the trust and relationship with one another.

? Why do you think it can be difficult for Christians to authentically live in fellowship with each other?

Possible Answers: We're ashamed of our sin/struggles or want to be perceived differently. We don't want to actually work on fighting the sin and have accountability for that. We've been hurt in the past when we've tried to be authentic.

? How can we, as a small group, create an environment that fosters authentic fellowship?

Possible Answers: Being open-minded and celebrating when people share authentically. Everyone committing to do this.

For Discussion and Accountability

? What is one area of your life where you struggle with "walking in the light"?

? What hinders you from authentic fellowship and/or confession?