



*Kay Wilson*

This week's devotionals are taken from 1 John. The apostle John, with the heart of a pastor, wrote this letter to encourage and strengthen the early church during a time of conflict and division over truth, spirituality, and behavior. It was John's desire to see God's divine community restored to a fellowship of love, joy, peace, faith, power, and victory. Key to that restoration is the need to remember who we are and what we possess as children of God and to return again to our first love. If ever there was a time for the church to remember and return, it is today.

I live in Monrovia, California, and co-pastor a church with my husband in Arcadia. While my greatest joy is my family, I also find abundant joy in the faith community where I experience the powerful presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the divine community. Besides spending time with my kids and grandkids, I love to travel, read, take long walks, garden, and cook. Prayer, Scripture, and nature are my favorite pathways to God.

*BIBLE READING: 1 John 1:1-4*

I do not like conflict. My guess is, no one does, but as we have all experienced, conflict is a given in this life. While we do not have to like conflict, we do have to recognize that as a beloved child of God we are expected to live in loving fellowship and unity with others. In fact, we are created as human beings to live in community and it is in community that we should experience our greatest joy.

God is the divine community—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When we said yes to God, we joined that divine community along with everyone else who has entered God’s kingdom. We are family and we are called to be of one mind and one heart. Why? A major reason is because engaging in loving fellowship with others through worship, service, prayer, celebration, study, and the breaking of bread is what nourishes and sustains our life together in the divine community and expands our capacity to experience the fullness of joy in God’s presence.

John wrote this epistle “to make our joy complete” (v. 4). There is great joy in knowing the truth. As John reminds us, God revealed his love, his power, and his redemptive plan through Jesus Christ so we might have fellowship with him and with one another. It is the fullness of God’s joy in our life that sustains us and gives us strength to navigate through both the good times and the bad.

*SONG: Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Abba Father, pour out your loving grace upon me and restore the joy of my salvation.*

—Kay Wilson

*BIBLE READING: 1 John 1:5-7*

As a child I was afraid of the dark. I always wanted a night-light so I could see if anything or anyone was in the room that might cause me harm. Now that I am grown, I have a night-light for a different reason. I need to see where I am going when I get up in the middle of the night. Without the light I stumble around and run the risk of stubbing my toes or falling over some item in my path. The point is, light brings clarity and allows me to see what is otherwise unseen. The same is true of Christ who is the divine Light, “the Light of the world” (John 8:12).

It is fitting that John uses the metaphor of light when talking about God and Christian fellowship. To walk in spiritual darkness is to stumble over lies and walk in disobedience. To “walk in the light, as he is in the light” means we walk in blessed obedience with clarity of the truth and we walk in a manner consistent with the character of God.

To “walk in the light, as he is in the light” means we walk in fellowship with the Father and with each other. It means we experience the joy of knowing the love of God, the truth of God, and the wisdom of God together in our divine community. Knowing we are one in the Spirit with the Creator of the universe should bring us profound joy and satisfaction.

*SONG: He Is the Light*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: God fill me with your light and then give me the strength to walk in it.*

—Kay Wilson

*BIBLE READING: 1 John 2:3-6*

I remember when my grandson played soccer for the first time. It was with a team of young boys who had no idea there were rules or how to play the game. They just wanted to play and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Sound familiar? It was hilarious. But as they grew up they quickly learned that everyone needs to follow the same rules and to practice, practice, practice effective soccer skills in order to win the game. To watch adults play soccer the way little children play soccer would be a painfully disappointing and tragic experience. The same is true in the divine community.

The true follower of Jesus cannot do whatever he or she wants nor can they make up their own rules. We have become one with Jesus. John puts it this way, “just as you are in me and I am in you...may they also be in us” (John 17:21). Obedience is crucial for the divine community to *experience* God’s blessing and to *be* a blessing. In discipleship there is no room for disobedience, which always results in chaos, self-destruction, and a total lack of unity.

John had it right when he reminded his readers that the way to remain in unity with Christ Jesus is to “walk just as he walked.” If we want to experience the fullness of being one with the Lord and with each other, we will trust that God knows best and we will obey with a song in our hearts.

*SONG: Trust and Obey*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, teach me to obey. I want to experience your fullness.*

—Kay Wilson

*BIBLE READING: 1 John 3:1-3*

We all have family. We may not always agree, we may not always like each other, and we may not always be in a place where we are able to enjoy family the way we would like, but we all have family. In a perfect world, we would have the perfect family, but we do not live in a perfect world. However, we can live in a perfect kingdom—the kingdom of God. In God’s kingdom we are part of the family of God as his beloved children.

As God’s children we are part of something incredible, something wonderful, something we as human beings have longed for deep within our souls since the beginning of time—to love and be loved. This is a perfect love that has no limits, and that is unconditional, complete, and eternal. This is a good thing to remember, particularly when life is difficult, when tensions elevate, or when conflict rises up and seeks to rob us of our joy.

The apostle John reminds us of our divine inheritance as God’s beloved children. We can rejoice that while we are not yet like him, nor can we see him as he is, one day we will behold him in all of his glory. We will inherit a perfect body, a perfect family with a perfect Father, and be wrapped up in a perfect love. In the meantime, we can stand fast in the knowledge that as we abide in Christ, this beautiful inheritance is an unchangeable reality.

*SONG: The Family of God*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: God, touch my heart, soul, mind, and body with your perfect love today.*

—Kay Wilson

*BIBLE READING: 1 John 4:4-6*

It is likely that most people have either been bullied, know someone who has been bullied, or are at least aware of the physical, mental, or physical pain that results from being bullied. The purpose of a bully is to gain and maintain power over another. Therefore, a bully can only succeed when they get the power they are attempting to acquire. Experts agree that the single most effective defense against bullying is self-confidence. People who lack self-confidence are those most likely to be caught up in a venomous cycle of victimization. The apostle John clearly understood the dynamics of bullying.

If we are part of the divine community we have a bully who seeks to gain power over us. John refers to him as “the one who is in the world.” However, because we are in the divine community of God, we have a divine power that lives within us, the spirit of the living Lord. There is no power in heaven or on earth greater than the power of the Holy Spirit. As God’s beloved children we can walk with complete confidence, because the one who is in us is far greater than the one who seeks power over us.

However, this is not merely self-confidence, it is self-confidence joined with God-confidence, the unchangeable promises and unmatched power of the Sovereign King of all creation. So the next time you feel powerless over anything or anyone who seeks to overpower and control you, remember who you are and more importantly, whose you are.

*SONG: There Is Power in the Blood*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, fill me with a renewed confidence in the divine power that abides in me.*

—Kay Wilson

*BIBLE READING: 1 John 4:7-12*

Love is an easy word to toss around. We use the word countless times a day, but rarely in the way God loves. When John says “God is love,” he means that God embodies perfect love in the same way he embodies righteousness, goodness, patience, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. When we truly know God and live as disciples in his divine community, we share in his attribute of divine love. It is the fruit of walking in obedience and being spiritually transformed into his likeness.

In fact, love is the strongest evidence that someone is of God and not of the world. To love like God loves is only possible because of God’s grace, which is more than receiving God’s favor. God’s grace incorporates both God’s favor and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to do what we could never do on our own—live and love like Jesus.

In order to love like God we must love one another. This is essential because no one has ever seen God except through his Son, Jesus. When we love like Jesus, the world sees and experiences the love of the unseen God through us. This is how Jesus lived and defined eternal life: “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

If you are having trouble loving friend or foe, run—don’t walk—back into the presence of the living Lord and let his love transform you.

*SONG: Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, transform my heart to love like you do.*

—Kay Wilson

*BIBLE READING: 1 John 5:4-5, 14-15*

I don't know of anyone who has not stumbled from time to time in his or her faith. Perhaps there is someone, but I seriously doubt it. But to stumble does not mean we have lost the war with sin and death. God is clear on this point. All those born of the blood of Christ Jesus live in victory! As the apostle John so aptly reminds us, "everyone born of God overcomes the world." To know and live in the knowledge of that divine victory over the world should fill us with great joy and hope for the future. We have been given eternal life. But there is more.

We also have been given victory in prayer. John goes on to assure us that we can be absolutely confident when we make our petitions to God. Living in divine victory guarantees we can approach the Lord with absolute certainty, that whatever we ask according to his will, he not only hears, he grants. This should cause our hearts to skip a beat or two. We have actually been given the divine power to pray for the will of God in heaven to become a reality here on earth.

To live in divine victory means we have the opportunity to walk triumphantly over the enemies of sin and death. But we also have the opportunity to kneel in prayer with an unwavering faith that God has given us the joy of taking part in bringing his kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

*SONG: Faith Is the Victory*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, give me a passion for praying in your name.*

—Kay Wilson