



1 JOHN:

Join the Circle!

Key Verse: 1:3 *What we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may have fellowship along with us. And indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

Key Words: Fellowship (4x); Abide (22x); Love (52x)

Purpose: to bring Christians into the circle of fellowship that includes Jesus and the Apostles.

SUMMARY

John and the other apostles are enjoying sweet fellowship with Jesus and his Father. What's more, they badly want the rest of us—their spiritual children—to enjoy the same sweet fellowship. So John writes this epistle to invite us, his "little children" (6x) and "beloved ones" (5x), to join their circle of fellowship.

This friendship circle excluded the "New Agers" of that day, who said that God has a Dark Side and a Light Side (*the Force?!).* So however you choose to live, you are expressing a valid relationship with God. *Not so,* says John. God is light, life, and love—and not their opposites. You wanna be close to Him, you gotta walk where He walks (in the light), live where He lives, and love whom He loves. It's one thing to be a child; it's another to be a friend. There's a friendship circle, and you need to join it.

Outline of 1 John

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| 1. Prologue: <i>Join the Circle of Fellowship!</i> | 1:1-4 |
| 2. The Foundational Rules of Fellowship | 1:5-2:11 |
| Basic rule: Be honest with God about your sin. | 1:5-2:2 |
| Advanced rule: Obey Christ's commands. | 2:3-11 |
| 3. The Threat to the Fellowship | 2:12-27 |
| 4. The Abundant Life of Fellowship | 2:28-4:19 |
| *Theme: Abiding in Christ = boldness when he returns | 2:28,4:17-19 |
| (1) Righteousness, not sin | 2:29-3:10 |
| (2) Love, not hate. | 3:10-23 |
| (3) Truth, not error. | 3:24-4:16 |
| 5. Conclusion: It's a Circle of Love. | 4:20-5:17 |
| 6. Epilogue | 5:18-21 |

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The Three Requirements for the Circle of Fellowship:

1. The H Requirement:

To walk with God as your companion,
you must be honest about your sin.

1:5-2:2

Action: Confess all your known sins to God.

2. The O Test:

To know Christ as your friend,
you must obey his commands.

2:3-11 2:29-3:10
3:22-24 5:2-3

Action: Line up your behavior with God's word.

3. The L Test:

To live with Christ as a disciple,
you must love your brother.

2:9-11 3:10-23
4:7-5:1

Action: Share yourself and your stuff in the circle of love.