



Articles and Sermons :: Only the True Gospel brings true Fellowship - Julian Freeman

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God brings us into fellowship with Himself so that we can have true joy!

When we experience true joy (in fellowship with God) the response of humans is to welcome others in

That's exactly what John is saying in 1 John

We have fellowship with God! And its amazing! You have to come! You have to enter in! You have to be with us! It brings true joy.

This has implications for evangelism.

Why is evangelism awkward?

It's because we're not excited. We do not have true joy.

True joy only comes in fellowship with God.

How can we invite others into fellowship with God when we are not in fellowship with God.

That's hypocritical and the awkwardness comes from the conscience revealing the hypocrisy.

When we are excited about something its not awkward.

Evangelism is the spontaneous overflow of a glad and free heart in Jesus Christ.

-Robert Munger

If our evangelism is forced or dutiful we are making little of the unique fellowship we have with God.

We are making little of the greatest privilege available.

We are saying: "fellowship with God does not give me joy" "fellowship with God does not get me excited"

We are telling God that fellowship with Him is nothing to us!

But why do we not find joy in it?

From neglect? We just don't pursue it?

Maybe we don't know how.

Maybe we try but we get no joy from it because of unconfessed sin or walking in sin.

This has implication for TAG also.

Are we coming to TAG ready to talk about our fellowship with God?

For all of this to happen whether in evangelism or in Christian conversation you must be participating in fellowship with God.

You must be exercising your fellowship with God in deep and meaningful ways so that you can invite others to share in it

Otherwise it's like inviting your friends to come swim with you and when they come over all you got a kiddie pool that's half filled.

There is nothing there for them.

But if you are doing the work, and you're laboring and digging deep, making a deep pool, that brings joy!

You can welcome others in with you so that they can experience God and you can speak life to them and encourage them and strengthen them and give them joy.

This joy is not a superficial joy, it is a joy grounded in true transparency.

The truth of the gospel is that which facilitates authentic transparency in fellowship.

The very nature of sin makes confession/dealing with sin corporate.
The nature of sin disrupts fellowship with God and with other people.
When you're not loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, when you're not in fellowship with God then you're not satisfied in Him so that you begin to covet.

Covetousness is idolatry.
Covetousness comes from lack of true joy.

This manifests itself in lust, gossiping, laziness and all manner of unrighteousness.
All this happens because you are not walking in fellowship with God, you are not confessing your sin, you are not dealing with your sin.
This affects everyone around you.
All the liars/false teachers in 1 John are saying that you can live privately, you can live on your own, you can do this by yourself.
But what John is saying is that the answer to everything is this corporate nature of the Christian life in community.
1 John 1:7
But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with ...
You know what he's going to say right?
God right?
Look at what it says verse 6
If we say we have fellowship with him...
The issue is fellowship with God
If we say we have fellowship with him but walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.
So you would expect the answer to be: but if we walk in the light we do have fellowship with God
But that's not what he says!
Look at what it says.
But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another!
In John's mind, fellowship with God is the same thing as fellowship with other believers. They are interchangeable. You cannot have one without the other!
He continues in verse 9 responding to the second false teaching:
1 John 1:8, 9
If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
You say, ya that's fine, confession, I can do that, privately, in my home, on my own, when I feel like it, but listen!
Every single time the New Testament talks about confession of sin, it's corporate confession!
Do you remember John the baptist preaching? What was happening? The whole town was coming out to him confessing their sins and being baptized.
When the gospel is going forth, the apostles are preaching in Acts 19 in the city of Ephesus, the people come out and bring their magic books and confess their idolatry.
They confess their sin, publicly, corporately, they are repenting.
In James 5, he says some of you are sick, this is what you need to do, you need to call the elders, you need to confess your sin and pray so that God will heal you.
Confess your sins to one another, that's the nature of New Testament confession of sins.
Confession of sin needs to be corporate because it affects other people.
1 John 1:9
If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just (righteous) to forgive us and cleanse us
The forgiveness of God is grounded in righteousness, in the fulfillment of law, it's grounded in the fulfilling of legal and just demands.
1 John 2:1
if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.
Advocate is lawyer-type language
We have an Attorney who is going to argue our case for us with the Father.
Who is He?
Jesus Christ the Righteous.
We have a righteous One arguing on our behalf to a righteous God.
Do you see how that cannot fail?
It continues, grounded in this righteous, legal understanding.
1 John 2:2

He is the propitiation for our sins

In other words, He is the payment, the price paid for our sins.

All the wrath, all the penalty that we deserved is paid in full on the Righteous One, so that when He is raised, the Righteous One can continue to argue righteous reasons why a Righteous God should forgive those who are unrighteous.

It is an undefeatable argument.

The truth of the gospel addressing our sin compels us to be honest and transparent in our relationships.

The best expression of God's heart is the gospel of Jesus Christ, His love for us expressed in the gospel.

If fellowship is the attempt to participate together in the life of God then the very best way to get into the life of God and to experience that in deep and meaningful ways is to get close to His heart, it's to get to the gospel.

If you want to have meaningful conversations with your brothers and sisters this is what you need, confession of sin, application of gospel.

We need to be committed to explicitly talking about sin and the fullness of the price paid.

The result of all this is increase in godliness.

The truth of the gospel brings true godliness in fellowship.

1 John 2:5

but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.

The love that God has shown us in the gospel reaches its intended purpose when we become a mirror of that love, so that that love reflects back to Him- our love to God fills us up so much that everything that pours out of us is love.

Because that's the greatest command: to love one another. It's communal, it's corporate, it's fellowship.

The love of God that was manifest in the gospel in Jesus Christ was the love that He came and laid down His life for His friends.

The greatest love that anyone has ever known.

He calls us to walk in that love.

1 John 2:6

whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

In fellowship, we are growing in godliness.

The command that we're supposed to keep, it is a command that is of its essence corporate and communal.

Think of a way to obey the command to love one another without anyone else in your life. You can't

A Christian cannot love if he's not surrounded by people.

The command that He gives, the very nature of the command that gives us assurance, that gives us certainty in our faith is an exercising of love in fellowship with other people.

When we live with other people in fellowship it will provide you lots of opportunities to grow in godliness, in Christlikeness because there will be lots of times when you will not want to love.

Community is such a great thing but why don't people actually want to do it? Because people bug other people.

Christian fellowship is like living in a greenhouse. You're surrounded by each other and you have the opportunity to just grow.

The result again of all this fellowship is assurance, certainty, you're walking with God, you're representing the gospel and you see how the gospel is at work in you and others around you.

That gives us confidence, that gives us hope, that gives us joy.

This Christian fellowship grounded in the gospel, we must not neglect it.

It is a precious, unique gift that God has given to us in Christ.

Let's use this fellowship grounded in the truth of the gospel to achieve joy that invites others in, to confess and confront sin, to spur us on to love so that we grow more and more in godliness.

Let's use this gift and not neglect it.

Father we are thankful for so many things. Thank You for the forgiveness of sins. Thank You for hope of eternal life. Thank You for the fellowship You have given us with You through Jesus. Thank You for the fellowship You have given us with each other. Father please do not let us neglect this gift. Help us to engage with joy and transparency and ultimately love so that You would be honored and glorified. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.