

# Common Ground

## 1 John 1:5-7

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#### A. The Source (v. 5):

1. This is the message – This is a message that John has “seen and heard proclaimed.” (1:3) When we apply this message to our lives, we have fellowship with God the Father and God the Son (1:3). When this message is integrated into our day-to-day lives, we live in truth (2:3-4; the ministry of the Holy Spirit; John 14:16-17). However, when we do not submit our lives to the Lord’s message, we live in darkness and become disconnected from our relationship with God and others (2:9-10).

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a) John states that this is a revelation (this gives the message authority; it is a revelation, not a discovery - illumination) that man could not have formed of themselves like the knowledge the Gnostic philosophers were mentioning. “There exists this message which we have heard from Him and which at present is ringing in our ears.” (1:1 – heard, seen and beheld)

2. This is the message – This message allows us to have a very intimate relationship with Christ, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (2:3-5). It perfects us (2:5) because this message keeps us from sinning (2:1-2).

3. We have heard – John wants us to know that he heard this information first hand emphatically, and when he listened to Christ speaking, his heart was utterly intent on learning what he heard and obeying with a willing heart. This is important because it means John clearly understood what was being said.

4. Announce to you, Declare – The message will always be the same, so he must freely tell us what it is.

5. God is light – There is absolutely no question about who the Creator of all things is and who sustains all things. He is an unquenchably illuminating power that allows us to understand the Gospel message, the scriptures so that we are able to practice the

truth. This is why we are called “sons of light” (Luke 16:8). David would say the Word is ‘a lamp to my feet and a light to my path’ (Psalm 119:105). This is why this becomes a common bond among believers.

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a) They continually and actively declare this message freely and openly (announce) that God, by His very nature, is (phos) a light that cannot be extinguished. This light highlights the splendor of God’s glory, the truthfulness of God, and His purity. Light stresses the self-communicative nature of God. It is His nature to impart Himself without limit.

b) The message that "God is light" needs to be compared with the declarations elsewhere by John that "God is spirit" (John 4:24) and that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). All three stress the immateriality of God and the "Goodness" of God-viz., God in His essence. Light especially emphasizes the splendor and glory of God, the truthfulness of God, and His purity.

c) Paul speaks of “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”(2 Cor. 4:4) and refers to the language of the Genesis creation narrative (4:6). Believers can be described as enlightened (Heb. 6:4; 10:32). Moreover, disciples are called “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). Ultimately, the basis for such statements is the belief that Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12; cf. 1:4-5, 9), for He is the emissary of God, who is light (1 John 1:5) and who calls people “out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). D.M.S.<sup>[1]</sup>

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6. In Him there is no darkness at all – The very nature of God has absolutely no possibility that anyone who walks in the light can sin or have their lives ruined.

a) Ten times John used “darkness” to refer to sin (John 1:5; 3:19; 12:35 [twice]; 1 John 1:5–6; 2:8–9, 11 [twice]).<sup>[2]</sup>

## **B. Relationships Last (vs. 6-7):**

1. If we say that we have fellowship – If we claim and cling to a belief that we are continuously committed to actively participate in submitting our lives to the message John declares, then it would be because we have willfully decided to put aside our

interest and become fully engaged in surrendering our lives to the will of God as declared by this message.

a) Some of John's opponents denied that evil could harm their enlightened spirits. They claimed to be righteous and did not acknowledge any sin in their lives (cf. 1:8). This first "if" test (1:6) formed John's foundational criticism of his opponents. The rest of the tests are elaborations on this one (cf. 1:8, 10).<sup>[3]</sup>

b) It is possible that the secessionists believe, like some later Gnostics, that they have achieved a state of sinlessness. Given the emphasis on God's holiness in this passage and the later statements about the secessionists, (3:6,9), it is perhaps more likely that they believe, like some later Gnostics, that they are sinless in a different sense - they do not regard certain sins they commit as sinful (3:6,9).

c) Fellowship (Greek *koinonia*) is the spiritual union of the believer with Christ-as described in the figures of the vine and branches (Jn 15:1-5) and the body and the head (1 Co. 12:12; Col. 1:18), as well as communion, are with the Father and with fellow believers.

2. If we say that we have fellowship – Saying we have an intimate relationship with God is not a confession; it is an active continuous obedience to His Word. This daily surrender means we have no personal interest. We are only interested in God's agenda for our lives and those around us (Philippians 2:1-11).

a) The first false claim--to have fellowship with God and yet to walk in darkness--refers to the Gnostics, according to Bultmann. They (Gnostic philosophers) believe that the spirit of man can do no wrong. This spirit is enveloped by a wicked body which cannot affect the spirit. Therefore, a man can walk in darkness but yet walk with God.

b) Again, our word "fellowship" (*koinōnian* (κοινωνιαν)) has the primary meaning of "to have joint-participation with someone else in things possessed in common by both," and the secondary meaning of "companionship" or "comradeship." This person claims to have things in common with God, common likes and dislikes, a common nature, and the divine, which basic things eventuate in a communion of interest and activity, which we call fellowship.

3. Walk in darkness - To walk in darkness is to pattern one's life after false teaching so that we live a sinful life that can become influenced by Satan (Ephesians 4:17-27).

a) If a person claims that they have a continuous hold on an intimate relationship with God that comes from their Christian experience, but by their lifestyle, and moral conduct (walk) demonstrate acts that are contrary to life and the existence of God, then they continually and habitually demonstrate falsehood. (Truth -- To "do the truth" is to express the highest of which one is capable in every sphere of his being).

b) The Old Testament often describes "obeying" God's commands as "walking" in them—so often that Jewish teachers called their view of the way Jewish people should behave *halakah*, "walking." The image of walking about in darkness connoted the danger of stumbling (2:10–11). The Old Testament condemned mixing up light and darkness, right and wrong (Is 5:20; cf. 2:5).<sup>[4]</sup>

c) Most figurative references to darkness appear in poetic material, such as Job, Psalms, and Isaiah. Generally, such darkness depicts ignorance about God's will. Knowledge of God is "light"; hence lack of such knowledge is "darkness" (Jb 12:24, 25; Mt 4:16; Jn 1:5; 8:12; 12:35, 46; 1 Jn 1:5; 2:8, 9, 11).

d) Job spoke of darkness as equivalent to nothingness in referring to the day of his birth (Jb 3:4–6). In other references, darkness stands for death, a land of shadows and gloom, which is the dwelling place of the dead far from the light of day (Jb 10:21, 22; 15:23; 17:12, 13; 18:18; Eccl 6:4; 11:8).

4. Lie - - "To deceive by lies," – When a person says they have a mutual interest in the will of God, and are committed to continuously apply the message of God, but yet do not surrender their lives to the will of God, that person is willfully being false and deceitful. t What they are doing or thinking conflicts with God's Word. (Act 5:3-4; Roman 9:1; 2 Corinthians 11:31; Galatians 1:20; Colossians 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:7).

a) But John's opponents did not believe in a literal flesh and blood body for Christ, nor in literal commandments that were valid. So with no standard for sin and no

literal body for sacrifice, the idea of a literal blood sacrifice was totally out of the question. Such was the heresy of the antichrists. Their false teachings took the life and merit out of Christ's death and blood.<sup>[5]</sup>

5. And do not practice the truth – Anyone who secretly lives contrary to the will of God willfully, and continuously is purposefully not living in conformity to the will of God. This is something they cannot blame anyone else or circumstance for, because this is represented in the text as an independent act.

6. If we walk in the Light – If we have the conviction that we are intentionally applying the message of God to our lives daily and therefore practice the truth, we will then walk in the unquenchable illumination of what the Word of God means as the Holy Spirit continuously brings it back to our remembrance (John 14:26; 16:13).

a) The word “light” (*phōs* (φως)) in the Greek text is without the article. The rule of Greek grammar is that the absence of the definite article shows quality, nature, or essence. What the inspired apostle said was, “God in His nature, essence, and character, is light.” That is, “God as a Person has a character or nature that partakes of light.” That light, of course, is not physical light, for John in the context is speaking of spiritual things. That light is ethical, spiritual, and moral. Then John strengthens his assertion by saying, “And darkness in Him does not exist, not even one bit.”

b) To walk in the light is to live in active obedience to God's command and to love as illustrated by Christ. When believers are in the habit of walking in the light (i.e., participating in the life of God), they will naturally confess their sins, and their consciences will be cleansed.<sup>[6]</sup>

c) Two things happen when believers walk in the light. They have fellowship with each other, and they are cleansed from sin. At this point, John was still focusing on the Christian “walk” in terms of commandment keeping. God's light shines forth His divine nature, which exposes His divine character. b Since God's children partake of His nature, they should also display His character in a godly behavior (note 4:17). John stressed fellowship with the eyewitness community of the apostles because they gave observable proof of true faith. The problem was that John's opponents claimed fellowship with God without having any fellowship with the community of believers (cf. 2:19).<sup>[7]</sup>

7. If we walk in the Light – Walking in the Light should produce a righteous lifestyle that pleases God. This lifestyle should provide constant illumination of what the Word means. Our increased understanding of God' should produce a life that consistently pleases God.

a) Walking in the light shows up our sins and frailties; thus we need constant cleansing, and this is available on the basis of the death of Christ. The verb is in the present tense and it refers to the cleansing as sanctification from all sin. Sin is singular, indicating the principle of sin, but the addition of all (*or every*) shows that it has many forms.<sup>[8]</sup>

8. Have fellowship with one another – When we intentionally seek to live a life that is consistently pleasing to God, the Spirit of God matures in us, as He does in anyone else's life, which empowers us to have a close mutual participation in the things of God. This causes relationships to have common interests which leads to long lasting friendships.

a) The Greek pronoun for "one another" (*allēlōn*) may refer to the two parties (God and the Christian) named in the first part of the statement. John's point is that if Christians live in the light where God is, then there is mutual fellowship between Himself and them. That is, they have fellowship with Him and He has fellowship with them. The light itself is the fundamental reality which they share. Thus, true communion with God is living in the sphere where one's experience is illuminated by the truth of what God is. It is to live open to His revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. As John soon stated (v. 9), this entails believers' acknowledging whatever the light reveals is wrong in their lives.<sup>[9]</sup>

b) Fellowship among Christians "shows the reality of that larger spiritual life which is life in God" (Wstct.).

c) Fellowship with God is the goal of the Christian life (1 Jn 1:3), and this relationship will be perfected forever when we see our Savior "face to face" (1 Cor 13:12), when God dwells with his people in the heavenly kingdom (Rv 21:3).

9. The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin - When we purpose our lives to practice principles taught in God's Word as our understanding grows in God's Word, we become more and more pure in our walk with God. This is because we lose the desire to willfully and intentionally disobey God's Word. The desire to disobey God diminishes in our lives because of the powerful development of the Holy Spirit in us. Paul teaches us that when we become drunk with the Spirit our decisions are wise (we are in the Light), and our worship is Spirit driven (Ephesians 5:15-20).

a) The blood "atones" through the life which is said to be "in" the blood. The power of Christ's life, freely rendered to God, throughout His life and in His death, and was set free by death for a wider service than was possible under the limitations of a human life in Palestine . At a definite date, is effective for the gradual (καθαρίζει) removal of sin in those who attempt to realize their union with God .. The use of καθαρίζει determines the sense to be the *removal* of sin rather than the cancelling of guilt. As ritual cleanliness was the condition of approach to God under the Jewish sacrificial system, so the "blood" of Christ cleans men's consciences for God's service and fellowship.<sup>[10]</sup>

10. The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin - The purer our relationship with God the more the fruit of the Spirit produces profoundly God's love. The deeper the intimacy of our relationship with the Lord (Matthew 22:36-40), the more we can love anyone in any circumstance because our love is a result of our willful obedience to God - not our feelings (1 John 4:7-20). This results in a powerful, successful prayer life (1 John 3:16-24).

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<sup>[1]</sup>Achtemeier, Paul J. ; Harper & Row, Publishers ; Society of Biblical Literature: *Harper's Bible Dictionary*. 1st ed. San Francisco : Harper & Row, 1985, S. 561

<sup>[2]</sup> Hodges, Z. C. (1985). [1 John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 885). Victor Books.

<sup>[3]</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [Tyndale concise Bible commentary](#) (p. 707). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>[4]</sup> Keener, C. S. (1993). [The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament](#) (1 Jn 1:6). InterVarsity Press.

<sup>[5]</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [Tyndale concise Bible commentary](#) (p. 708). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>[6]</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [Tyndale concise Bible commentary](#) (pp. 707–708). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>[7]</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [Tyndale concise Bible commentary](#) (p. 707). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>[8]</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F., eds. (1962). [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament](#) (1 Jn 1:7). Moody Press.

<sup>[9]</sup> Hodges, Z. C. (1985). [1 John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 885). Victor Books.

<sup>[10]</sup> Brooke, Alan England: *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*. New York : C. Scribner's Sons, 1912, S. 15