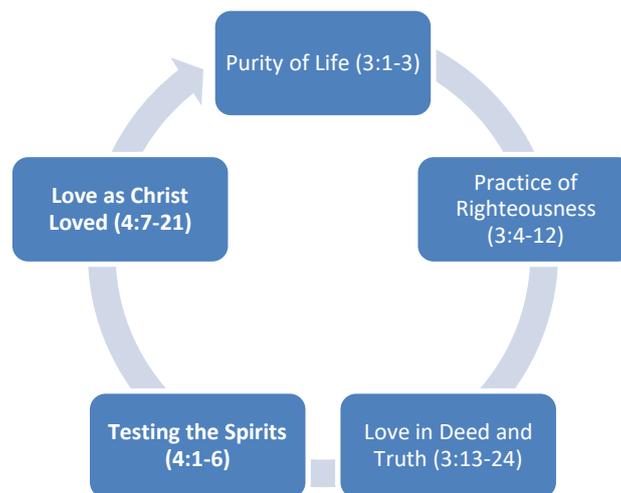


Life BPC Sunday School Adults' Class: Study of the First Epistle of John (Nov – Dec 2016)

Lesson 4: Characteristics of Fellowship (Part II) (1John 4:1-21)

Overview

Chapter 3 and 4 explained the 5 characteristics of fellowship. Characteristics are distinctive marks and qualities that belong to a person or an item. In this case, 5 identification marks were listed of true fellowship in the Lord. We will cover the last 2 in Chap 4.



The 5 Characteristics of Fellowship

Characteristic #4: Testing the Spirits (4:1-6)

Beyond the warning given in chap 2 about the antichrist and antichrists, Apostle John renewed his emphasis in chap 4 on the need to guard against false teachings. A Christian cannot be naive but to test (try) the spirits. In the 1st Century AD, there were many false teachers who came to attack the Church. Summary of major attacks:

- ❖ 1st Century – Attack on Christ
- ❖ 15th-16th Century – Attack on Salvation
- ❖ 19th Century – Attack on Faith
- ❖ 20th Century – Attack on the Bible

One particular aspect is to deny the humanity of Christ (is come in the flesh v.2). Gnosticism advocates that anything material is evil, hence for Christ to be a holy being, He must only be a Spirit. Docetism teaches that Christ is a Spirit only. Without a body, one will subsequently deny the Resurrection and Ascension. It will lead to a full denial of Christ. Christians are given the unction of the Holy Ghost (2:20), and we know “greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (4:4). Those who chose to follow the false teachers are of the **world** (sin, corruption, destruction). These will reject the teachings of John. Only true believers will follow the truths taught by John (v.5-6).

Application: We have to be aware of God's teachings, be alert to false one and be astute. This warning is also given in 2John. 3 warnings are good enough for us to sit up and stay alert, be on guard! This is the only way to test – with God's Word! Not with our intellect, logic, theories, postulations, hypotheses. But with God's Word alone. Consider the story of the currency note examiner. What do you know about Apologetics?

Characteristic #5: Love as Christ Loved (4:7-21)

v.7 gave a clear exhortation that 'every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God'. On the contrary, 'he that loveth not, knoweth not God' (v.8). God's love was manifested by sending His Son to be the Propitiation (sacrifice) so that we might have everlasting life. Herein is love i.e. this is the definition of Agape, sacrificial love. If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (v.11).

God's love is perfected – if we love one another, with God dwelleth in us (v.12). No man hath seen God – the power of God must be comprehended by faith and love! How do we know God dwelleth in us? Because of the leading of the Holy Spirit (v.13). He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him (v.16).

God's love is made perfect – when we have the boldness (confidence) in the day of judgement (v.17). Read 2:28 'not be ashamed before Him at His coming', 3:3 'He shall appear'. Dwelling in God's love will make us love our brother (v.21).

Application: Are we dwelling in love? Are we ready to meet God? A characteristic of true fellowship is mutual love and support, because of the dwelling in God's love. Ready to meet God? Do you have the boldness in the day of Judgment? (v.17). Read Amos 4:12 *"Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; Because I will do this to you, Prepare to meet your God, O Israel."*

What kind of life are we living for Christ? In love and obedience? Or in lusts and pride, hating the brethren and hurting the fellowship in Church? Consider sacrificial love (agape), as against sensual and brotherly love.

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