

# I JOHN: DISCERNING TRUE FROM FALSE SPIRITUALITY

## **Part IV: Discerning If We Truly Spiritually Fellowship With God**

### **(1 John 2:3-6)**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. There is a lack of spiritual discernment in many Christians today on what constitutes true fellowship with God, what can be illustrated in a tragic event that occurred with a cult in Guiana: not until the mass suicide in Jonestown did many Christians even realize "that something was terribly wrong with Jim Jones," the group's pastor. (Dave Hunt & T. A. McMahon, The Seduction of Christianity, 1985, p. 7)
- B. This problem also existed in the Apostle John's era, so in 1 John 2:3-6 he gave objective evidences of true spiritual fellowship with God so we might discern whether we truly fellowship with Him (as follows):

#### **II. Discerning If We Truly Spiritually Fellowship With God, 1 John 2:3-6.**

- A. In 1 John 2:3a, John wrote we can "know" (*ginoskomen*, present tense; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 814; The Analyt. Grk. Lex., 1972, p. 79) that we "have come to know" (*egnokamen*, perfect tense; Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 113) God in our **experience** of the **Christian walk** (B. F. Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, 1974, p. 46) by **testing** as suggested by John's expression, "in this" (*en touto*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.), which is translated "hereby" KJV or "by this" ESV.
- B. What follows in 1 John 2:3b-6 are **three test evidences** of true spiritual fellowship with the Lord (as follows):
1. First, a believer experiences true fellowship with God **only if he obeys God's Word**, 1 John 2:3b-4:
    - a. Stated in the positive, John claimed that we know we have come to know God in our walk if we obey His commandments, 1 John 2:3b. By application, this statement includes heeding all of God's Word, for all of God's written revelation, Scripture, is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness that a believer might be thoroughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
    - b. To make the point even stronger, John then stated this truth in the negative: if one claims he knows God in his walk but he does not heed His Word, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 1 John 2:4.
    - c. In other words, the believer fellowships with God **only if he heeds God's Word -- no exceptions!**
  2. Second, a believer experiences true fellowship with God **only if he obeys God's commands so that this obedience translates into his having the love of God perfected in him**, 1 John 2:5:
    - a. True fellowship with God where the believer heeds God's Word leads to the love of God being "perfected; made complete" (*teleioo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 817-818) in him, what is explained in John's Gospel at John 14:21-23; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 888.
    - b. There, we read that if a believer obeys God, he expresses his love to God by that obedience, Jn. 14:21a.
    - c. Consequently, God then reciprocates the love expression, manifesting His love back to the believer in that believer's walk (John 14:21b, 23), what is a highly edifying, rewarding experience for him.
  3. Third, a believer experiences true fellowship with God **only if he lives like Jesus lived**, 1 John 2:6:
    - a. When John used the term "abideth" (KJV) in 1 John 2:6, he used it in the same sense as he did in His Gospel at John 15:4 to refer to fellowship with the Lord, Ibid.
    - b. Thus, if a believer claims to fellowship with God, "that one must walk also as He walked," *opheilei kathos ekeinos periepatason kai autos peripatein*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1 John 2:6.
    - c. The "He" in this phrase in the Greek text refers to **Jesus** (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.), for in His earthly life He fully expounded God the Father (John 1:18; 14:8-9).
    - d. So, if we say we fellowship with God, we must live like Jesus did **as to righteousness**. [We qualify the verb "walk" to mean aligning to righteousness, for (1) Jesus' culture (John 2:1-11) and (2) dispensation (John 2:13) differed from ours so that some of His deeds we do not do today, and (3) His calling differed from ours (John 2:15), requiring differences in His service functions from ours.]

***Lesson:*** *We discern true spiritual fellowship with God by three tests: (1) one must obey God's Word without exception, (2) he must have that obedience translate into seeing God's love perfected in his walk in that (a) he both loves God and heeds His Word, (b) resulting in God's manifesting His love to the believer in edifying ways in his life, and (3) one must live the righteous life that Jesus did. Any failure in these tests indicates a false spirituality.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we believers heed Scripture. (2) As we heed it, we should see God's love perfected in us as we both love and obey Him and see Him manifest His edifying love to us in our lives, (3) and note that we are living in the righteousness that Jesus did in His earthly life. (4) If we fail these tests, may we adjust to fellowship with God.*