

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

# The First Divine Test of Fellowship

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I John 2:7-17

## **1 The First Divine Test of Fellowship.**

**What's a test of fellowship? A test of fellowship is an issue that determines whether you accept someone as a Christian brother or sister.**

**So, what are some traditional tests of fellowship? 2**

**In ancient times Christians used the acceptance of the Apostles' Creed to determine those who were true believers apart from those in cults differing doctrinally from the "true" church. 3**

**In more recent times tests of fellowship revolved around the right understanding of the Millennium question. 4**

**In the earlier part of the twentieth century the Christian Fundamentalist Movement was established to oppose the teachings of the more liberal mainline churches. These practices included the challenges presented to traditional Christian faith by liberal theology and higher criticism of the Bible. Tests of**

**fellowship were erected around acceptance of the five doctrines of fundamentalism. <sup>1</sup> <sub>5</sub>**

**I began my Christian journey in a church that used the use or non-use of instrumental worship as a test of fellowship among other issues. <sup>6</sup> Many in my church use the form and purpose of Christian baptism as a test of fellowship.**

**My purpose in presenting these next two messages is not to question the traditional tests of fellowship mentioned above but, simply, to explain what a test of fellowship is.**

**Now to our first passage of scripture in First John, chapter 2, verses 7 through 17. <sup>2</sup> <sub>7</sub>**

**Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard.**

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Fundamentalist Doctrines: (1) Biblical inspiration and the infallibility of Christian scripture, (2) the virgin birth, (3) belief that Christ's death was the atonement for sin, (4) the bodily resurrection of Jesus and (5) historical reality of the miracles of Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> The second biblical test of fellowship is in I John 2:18-27.

**Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing, and the true light is already shining.<sup>3</sup> 8**

**Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.<sup>4</sup> 9**

**I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father.**

**I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men,**

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<sup>3</sup> | John 2:7-8.

<sup>4</sup> | John 2:9-11.

**because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.**<sup>5</sup> <sup>10</sup>

**Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.**<sup>6</sup> <sup>11</sup>

**The Bible concept: when a person invites the Lord to take control of their lives and is baptized, the Lord adds him to His church.<sup>7</sup> They are to be accepted as a Christian brother or sister.** <sup>12</sup>

**Are there biblical tests of fellowship? I believe there are two. Both are found here and in the next passage of scripture (**I John 2:18-27**). They are (1) commitment**

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<sup>5</sup> I John 2:12-14.

<sup>6</sup> I John 2:15-17.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 2:47 - And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

to the Lordship of Christ (the next message) and (2) to love one another (this message).<sup>13</sup>

So let's look at the first divine test of fellowship - love.

## I. What's Love?

What's love?<sup>14</sup>

Is it the feeling you get when you meet an attractive person? Is it cuddling a little baby? Is it petting a cute puppy?<sup>15</sup>

Biblical love is giving of yourself to satisfy someone else's needs.<sup>16</sup>

**It's an attitude**, like faith, expressed in actions.

The New Testament portion of our Bible was originally written in koine, a dialect of ancient Greek. The Greeks had four words for love!<sup>17</sup>

The first<sup>8</sup> is giving to get something in return. It is a selfish love. You may use it to say, "I love hamburgers"! It was used as an expression of illicit

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<sup>8</sup> ἐρως.

sex. We get our English word “exotic” from this word.

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The second word <sup>9</sup> is giving to someone you have a special relationship with. This might be a relative or a friendship. It is an attachment kind of love. Lord Jesus was trying to get Peter to admit that he loved Him this way during the “Peter. Do you love Me?” conversation. <sup>10</sup> We get the name of the city “Philadelphia” (love-brother) or “brotherly love” from this word. <sup>19</sup>

The third word <sup>11</sup> is giving primarily because of the marriage bond. It’s more of an obligation type love. In

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<sup>9</sup> φιλέω.

<sup>10</sup> John 21: 15-17 - When they had breakfasted, Jesus said to Simon Peter: “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me more than these?” He said to him: “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him: “Be a shepherd to my lambs.” Again he said to him a second time: “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?” He said to him: “Yes, Lord. You know that I love you.” He said to him: “Be a shepherd to my sheep.” He said to him the third time: “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?” Peter was vexed when he said to him the third time: “Do you love me?” So he said to him: “Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you.” Jesus said to him: “Feed my sheep.

<sup>11</sup> στέργω.

the Broadway play and the movie, “Fiddler on the Roof”, Tevye and his wife, Golde, have a conversation about this traditional love relationship they inherited which, then, leads to the song, “Do You Love Me?” They resolve, together, that their marriage of twenty five years, producing these five lovely daughters, was more than just the, “I cook your food”, “I wash your clothes”, etc., type of relationship. <sup>20</sup>

The fourth word <sup>12</sup> means giving because of the need, regardless of receiving in return, or relationship with the person receiving your gift, or the attractiveness of that person. This is the love God has for you and that which He wants you to have for others. <sup>21</sup>

**It's a command.** Second John, verse 6, **And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.** <sup>22</sup>

Now for verse 7 and 8 in our scripture today, **Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an**

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<sup>12</sup> ἀγαπάω.

old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. <sup>23</sup>

It's old because it is found in the Old Testament. Leviticus, chapter 19, verse 18 - **Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.** <sup>24</sup>

It's old because Lord Jesus repeated it. **A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.** <sup>13</sup> <sup>25</sup>

But it's also new in that the Lord's life gave it a new dimension and His death gave it a new scope. <sup>14</sup> <sup>26</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> John 13:34.

<sup>14</sup> I John 2: 8 - Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

It's new because a Christian's transformed life proves it's workable today! Romans, chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, **Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.** 27

## II. What's the Incentive for Love?

What's the incentive for love? 28

**You are to love because love was expressed to you!**

The Apostle John in this passage uses poetry to show you the benefits. 29

In verse 12 it says, **I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. You have forgiveness!** 30

In verse 13 it says, **I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. You have the power to overcome Satan in your life!** <sup>31</sup>

In verse 14 it says, **I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one. You are an overcomer because of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in your life!** <sup>32</sup>

**You are to love because it determines where you have fellowship!** <sup>33</sup>

**Love puts you in the light where you have fellowship with the Lord and His church.** <sup>34</sup> Ephesians, chapter 5, verse 8, **For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.** <sup>35</sup>

So that's why verse 8 in our scripture today says you will shine <sup>15</sup> and verse 17 says you will live forever! <sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> I John 2:8 - Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

Thus, verses 9 and 10 say you can know you are in the light if you are really loving one another! **Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.** <sup>37</sup>

**Lack of love puts you in the dark where you have fellowship with the world, secular society apart from God.** <sup>38</sup>

James, chapter 4, verse 4, puts it well, **You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.** <sup>39</sup>

Therefore, verse 11 states, **But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going,**

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<sup>16</sup> I John 2:17 - The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

**because the darkness has blinded him. Lack of love makes you blind! 40 <sup>17</sup>**

**The final question in this message, then, is . . . 41**

### **III. Who Should I Love?**

**Who should I love? 42**

**Verse 15 and 16 continues, Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.**

**You are not to love the world. The consequences of loving the world are: 43**

**You will not have the Father's love in you. Worldly things do not come from the Father! 44**

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<sup>17</sup> See also II Peter 1:9 - But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind . . . and II Corinthians 4:3-4 - And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

**The cravings of sinful man** are worldly ambition, selfish aims and passing judgments using the world's standards. <sup>45</sup>

**The lust of the eyes** is the motivation to get material things and placing value only on them. <sup>46</sup>

**The boasting of what he has and does** is the continual attempt to impress others and deceive by pretending to be someone you are not.

Observe the parable of the Reluctant Lover. A young man said he was in love but seldom mentioned his girl to his friends and relatives. He would court her once a week, unless he has a headache or could put in some extra time at work. He had little to say when he was with her and after an hour or so would become restless. She loved good music and books but when she loaned him her books to read he found them dull and wouldn't discuss them unless put on the spot.

What was the reason for his not staying more than an hour a week with her? He was still carrying a torch for a former sweetheart! <sup>18</sup> <sub>47</sub>

How are you with your relationship to the Lord? Are you a reluctant lover spiritually? <sub>48</sub>

Now, notice verse 10, Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. **You are to love your brother!**

First John, chapter 4, verse 21, emphasizes this, **And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother**. <sub>49</sub>

Who is my brother? <sub>50</sub>

The Lord's answer was in a parable He told about a Jewish man who was beaten and robbed on a lonely road. When he was about dead a preacher came by, took a look at him, and then proceeded on his journey. A little while later a church deacon passed by, saw the man, but when on down the road without stopping.

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<sup>18</sup> "The Reluctant Lover", I John 2:12-17, Our Daily Bread.

**Finally a Samaritan, the victim of systemic racism and hated by the Jews, came by, took pity on the half dead Jewish man and cared for him.**

**After telling this story Lord Jesus asked his audience who was the neighbor to the Jewish man. Obviously, it was the man who expressed love to him. <sup>19</sup>**

**Your brother is anyone who has a need you can satisfy! <sup>51</sup>**

**While you live in this world you must not let this world live in you!**

**Do you really love the person sitting next to you?**

**Would you really give of yourself sacrificially to meet their need?**

**If you wouldn't, you may not really be loving God!**

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<sup>19</sup> Luke 10:29-37.