

The background of the image is a photograph of a sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with wispy clouds colored in shades of orange, yellow, and blue. In the foreground, there is a dark silhouette of bare trees and shrubs. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and contemplative.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,
and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.

1 John 5:1

Koinonia

THE FIRST, MOST IMPORTANT, and most direct method we have to show our love for God is by raising up to Him words of worship and praise. We call out His attributes, thereby proclaiming His lordship over our lives.

But we also love God by *loving each other*. Worshiping God is not limited to those times we are settled into the stiff-backed pews of the church building. We are given the opportunity to declare our love for Him every day as we mingle with the rest of His children—our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The apostle John sets out the principle for us near the end of his first epistle. John begins by answering the question, “How do we love God?”

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.

1 John 5:1

Everyone who believes that Jesus is God’s Son is “born of God.” John tells us that we love God by loving His children. Then he goes on to answer the next question, which is, “*How do we love His children?*”

Surely there must be many ways we can show our love for each other—as many ways as there are those who believe. But what is the one acceptable way to love each other?

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.

1 John 5:2

The apostle John tells us that we demonstrate our love for each other by obeying God's commandments. What commandments might these be?

And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

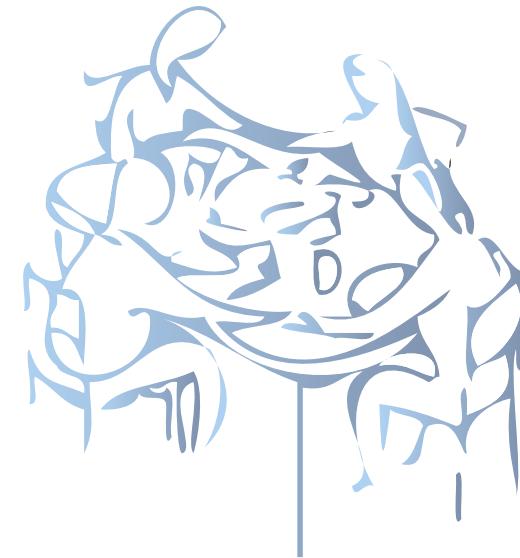
1 John 4:21

It sounds as if the apostle is taking us in circles. What he is saying is that when we enter God's family through the blood of Christ, we enter into an intimate relationship—not only with the eternal God of heaven, but also with those who share that same intimacy with Him. And He accepts our love for each other as love for Him. More than that, He *commands* us to demonstrate this love.

How do we love God? The first way is to worship Him directly—on our knees, with uplifted hands, with our hearts open and offered up. The second way to love God is to love *each other*—to lift up to Him the sacrifice of grace shown to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Worship, by definition, places God before everything else. Love for our fellow believers in Christ can only be categorized as worship when it begins with, and is rooted in, our love for God.

True Christian love for a brother or sister is the biblical concept of fellowship. The Greek word behind most occurrences of the word is *koinonia*—which means a partnership, a participation in another's life. Something far deeper and more profound than chatting over a potluck dinner, discussing the weather or last



week's football scores, the concept of *koinonia* describes two or more people who have made an investment in each other's lives based on their mutual love for the Lord.

True *koinonia* fellowship can only take place when one has first connected solidly with God. If the necessary worship is assumed by the very definition of the process, then out of that worship flows the edification, the equipping, the encouragement so necessary to a healthy body of Christ.

After six days of doing battle with the lords of this temporal kingdom, we should approach the sanctuary with a singular dedication to come face to face with the Lord of the eternal Kingdom. Then moments spent in the presence of our God, moments of reverent humility met by His outpouring grace, inform the sweet outflow of our own grace displayed to each other.

And *that* is fellowship.