



St Barnabas Cray

Walking the Narrow Path of Fellowship

Weekly Devotional Journey

Monday - Invited Into the Light

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:5-7 NIV)

Devotional Thought

There is something breathtaking about the opening claim of John's letter. Not a theory, not a proposition argued from a distance — but a testimony. 'We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us.' John writes as someone who has been undone by an encounter with the living God, and who cannot help but share what he has found. This is where all genuine Christian fellowship begins: not in programmes or politeness, but in the overflow of a life that has been touched by God's own light.

God is light. Pure light. Not mostly light, not light with a few dim corners — but light in whom there is no darkness at all. This is one of the most radical statements in all of Scripture. It means that God is utterly holy, completely transparent, entirely good. There is no hidden agenda with God, no shadow side, no darker motive lurking beneath the surface of his love. What you encounter in Christ is what God is truly like.

And here is the wonder: this God of blazing, uncompromising light does not keep his distance from us. He invites us near. He calls us into fellowship — into a shared life with himself. The word fellowship here is rich and deeply practical. It is the same word used for business partners, for a married couple, for neighbours who share a fence and look out for one another. This is not a formal, ceremonial arrangement. It is relational, warm, and deeply personal.

Yet John is also honest. Walking in the light is not merely a feeling or a claim we make about ourselves. It is a way of living. If we say we belong to God but continue to stumble around in the dark — in dishonesty, in isolation, in habits that we know grieve him — then something is deeply misaligned. The invitation is not to perfection, but to honesty. To step into the light, where God meets us, cleanses us, and draws us close. This is where the journey of fellowship begins — with God himself.

Reflection Question

When you consider that God is pure light with no darkness in him at all, what does that stir in you — comfort, challenge, or something else? What areas of your own life feel like they are still being lived in the shadows rather than in his light?

From Sunday's Sermon

"We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us. This experience of communion with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Our motive for writing is simply we want you to enjoy this too. Your joy will double our joy."

Today's Application

Begin this week by taking a few quiet minutes to honestly examine where you are currently walking — in the light or in the shadows. This is not an exercise in self-condemnation but in honest self-awareness before a God who loves you completely. You might write down one or two areas of your life where you sense God is gently calling you further into the light — perhaps a relationship that needs honesty, a habit that keeps you in the dark, or a fear that is keeping you from full trust in him. Then, as a concrete step, bring that specific thing to God in prayer today. You do not need to have it all sorted before you come — you simply need to come. Consider also sharing this with one trusted Christian friend this week. Fellowship in the light begins with the courage to be known.

Morning Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you that you are light, and that in you there is no darkness at all. Thank you that your invitation is not to earn a place near you, but simply to come — to step out of the shadows and into the warmth of your presence. Forgive me for the ways I have preferred the dark: the habits I have hidden, the truths I have avoided, the distance I have kept. Today, I choose to walk in the light with you. Purify me by the blood of Jesus. Draw me close. And as I draw near to you, draw me near to others who are walking the same road. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Devotion

Resting in the Light

Evening Reflection

As this day draws to a close, take a moment to look back over it with gentle, honest eyes. Where did you sense God's light breaking through — in a conversation, a moment of unexpected grace, a quiet prompting that you followed or perhaps ignored? Walking in the light is not a dramatic, once-for-all leap. It is a thousand small choices made throughout an ordinary day: choosing honesty over impression management, choosing to notice others rather than rushing past, choosing to bring our real selves to God rather than a polished version. John's great testimony was not written from a place of perfection. He had stumbled badly in his own story. Yet he had found, again and again, that God's light is not a searchlight of judgement but a lantern of welcome. It exposes what needs to be seen, yes — but only so that it can be cleansed and healed. Tonight, rest in the knowledge that the same God who called you into fellowship with himself this morning has been with you every step of this day. You are not alone in the dark. You are held in the light.

Evening Reflection

Looking back over today, where did you most clearly sense God's presence — and was there a moment when you chose to step towards the light rather than away from it?

Evening Prayer

Lord, thank you for this day and for your faithful presence in it. Where I stumbled, forgive me. Where I caught a glimpse of your light, fill me with gratitude. As I rest tonight, remind me that I am held — not by my own goodness, but by your grace. Amen.

Tuesday - Called Together: The God Who Gathers

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (Ephesians 1:4-6 NIV)

Devotional Thought

One of the most quietly revolutionary truths in all of Christian theology is this: God does not merely tolerate community — he initiates it. Before the world was made, before you drew your first breath, before you had done anything to commend yourself to anyone, God chose to gather a people to himself. Not because we earned a place or because we are especially good, but because he wants us near. This is the heartbeat behind everything the sermon calls us to consider about fellowship.

John writes that we have fellowship with the Father. Pause there. Fellowship — that rich, practical, relational word — with the Father. The Almighty. The one before whom the angels veil their faces. He wants us close. He goes looking for scattered people and brings them home. This is not a distant deity who occasionally grants an audience. This is a Father who runs down the road when he sees his child returning from far away.

And this matters profoundly for how we understand the church. The church is not a human invention — a social club for like-minded people who happen to share religious interests. It is God's gathered people, called out of isolation and into communion, first with him and then with one another. We did not choose one another. In many cases, we would not have chosen one another. We come from different backgrounds, different educations, different nationalities, different starting points in life. And that, as the sermon reminds us, is not a problem to be managed — it is a gift to be received.

Because it is not sameness that holds us together. It is the belief, shared across all our differences, in who God is and what he has done for us in Christ. When we truly grasp that we have all been gathered by the same grace, the barriers that divide us begin to look much smaller. We are not strangers thrown together by circumstance. We are family, called together by the same Father, held together by the same love.

Reflection Question

Do you tend to think of your church community as something you have chosen, or as something God has called you into? How might it change the way you relate to other believers if you truly saw them as fellow recipients of the same undeserved grace?

From Sunday's Sermon

"God calls out a people for fellowship with himself... Not because we earned a place or because we're especially good, but because he wants us near. And so he brings us into fellowship to know him and be known by him."

Today's Application

Today, let the truth that God gathers his people shape how you see the people around you in your church community. Think of one person in your fellowship whom you find it genuinely difficult to connect with — perhaps someone whose personality, background, or opinions differ significantly from your own. Rather than avoiding them or simply tolerating them, make a deliberate choice today to see them through a different lens: as someone gathered by the same Father, loved by the same Christ, indwelt by the same Spirit. You might not be able to meet with them today, but you can pray for them specifically by name. Ask God to give you genuine warmth and curiosity towards them. Then, if the opportunity arises this week, take a small step — a kind word, a question about their week, an offer to help. Fellowship begins with seeing one another as God sees us.

Morning Prayer

Father, thank you that you are a God who gathers. Thank you that you did not leave us scattered and alone, but called us into your family — not because of anything we have done, but because of your great love. Help me today to see my brothers and sisters in Christ through your eyes: as people you have chosen, loved, and brought near. Give me genuine warmth for those I find difficult, and genuine gratitude for the community you have placed me in. May I never take lightly the gift of belonging to your people. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Devotion

Belonging Is a Gift

Evening Reflection

This evening, sit quietly with the thought that you belong — not because you have earned it, not because you are particularly easy to love, but because God has gathered you to himself. That is an extraordinary thing. In a world where belonging so often feels conditional, where community can be fragile and friendships can fracture, there is a fellowship that holds. It is not held together by our consistency or our charm, but by the faithfulness of the God who called us. Today you may have found it easy to feel that belonging — perhaps in a warm conversation, a moment of shared prayer, or simply the comfort of knowing others are walking the same road. Or perhaps today felt lonely, disconnected, a little grey. Both experiences are real, and both can be brought to God tonight. The truth does not change with our feelings: you are gathered, you are held, you are known. And tomorrow there will be fresh opportunities to live out that belonging — to be the person who makes someone else feel seen and welcomed in the community God has called you both into.

Evening Reflection

Did you experience a sense of belonging today — with God, with others, or both? What made it feel real, or what made it feel distant?

Evening Prayer

Lord, thank you that I belong to you — not because I deserve it, but because you chose me. On days when belonging feels real, let me be grateful. On days when it feels distant, remind me of your faithfulness. Help me to be someone who helps others feel they belong too. Amen.

Wednesday - The Language of We

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore. (Psalm 133:1-3 NIV)

Devotional Thought

There is a moment in the sermon that is deceptively simple but genuinely profound. Researchers studying married couples in conflict discovered something striking: the couples who used the word 'you' repeatedly — 'you always do this, you never do that' — tended towards negativity, rising stress, and entrenched conflict. But the couples who used 'we' even in the middle of a disagreement found better solutions, calmed down more quickly, and reconciled more readily. The conclusion was striking: 'we users may have a sense of shared interest that sparks compromise and other ideas pleasing to both partners.'

Now, this is not merely a communication tip. It is a window into something deeply theological. The language of 'we' reflects a fundamental orientation of the heart — a recognition that I am not the centre of the story, that my interests are not the only interests that matter, that I am bound up with others in a shared life. And that is precisely what biblical fellowship looks like.

The psalmist in Psalm 133 is lyrical about this. When God's people dwell together in unity — not uniformity, but unity — it is like precious oil flowing down, like refreshing dew on dry ground. It is beautiful, it is life-giving, and it is where God commands his blessing. Notice that word 'commands'. God does not merely suggest blessing upon unified community — he commands it. It flows where his people hold together.

This is not about suppressing disagreement or pretending everything is fine. It is about maintaining a fundamental orientation towards one another — a 'we' posture rather than a 'you versus me' posture. It is about approaching even our differences with the question 'how do we navigate this together?' rather than 'how do I win this?' Christian fellowship is not the absence of friction. It is the presence of a love that is bigger than the friction, held together by a shared belonging to Christ.

Reflection Question

Think about a relationship in your life — at home, at work, or at church — where tension exists. Would you honestly describe your internal posture in that relationship as 'we' or 'you'? What would it look like to shift towards a 'we' orientation, even if the other person does not?

From Sunday's Sermon

"The language of we changes how we treat each other. And that's the kind of fellowship sharing that John is referring to. Not me and my faith, but we together walking in the light."

Today's Application

Choose one relationship today where you know there is some tension or distance — it might be a family member, a colleague, a fellow church member, or even someone you have been avoiding. Before you interact with them (or before you think about them), pause and consciously shift your internal language from 'you' to 'we'. This might mean praying: 'Lord, how can we navigate this together?' rather than 'Lord, help them to see that I am right.' In any conversation today, practise asking questions rather than making statements. Show genuine interest in the other person's perspective. If a disagreement arises, try using phrases like 'What could we do about this?' or 'How do we move forward from here?' This is not weakness — it is the strength of someone who has understood that God blesses those who stick together.

Morning Prayer

Lord, forgive me for the times I have approached my relationships with a 'you' posture — focused on what others owe me, what they have done wrong, how they have failed me. Teach me the language of 'we'. Help me to see those around me not as opponents or obstacles, but as fellow travellers on the same road, held together by your grace. Where there is tension in my relationships today, give me the humility and the courage to seek reconciliation and shared ground. May the unity of your people be a testimony to the watching world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Devotion

Reviewing the Day Together

Evening Reflection

As you come to the end of this day, think back over your interactions — the conversations you had, the moments of connection or disconnection, the times you found yourself instinctively reaching for a 'you' posture when a 'we' posture was needed. Fellowship is not built in grand gestures. It is built in the accumulation of small choices: the question asked with genuine interest, the criticism swallowed and replaced with a question, the moment of choosing to stay engaged rather than withdrawing. Today may have held some of those moments. Perhaps you managed the shift well, and something softened in a difficult relationship. Or perhaps you found it harder than expected, and the old patterns reasserted themselves. Either way, bring it honestly to God tonight. He is not disappointed in your struggle — he is present in it. And tomorrow is another day of small, faithful choices towards the kind of 'we' that reflects his own Trinitarian life: Father, Son, and Spirit, dwelling together in perfect unity and love.

Evening Reflection

In which conversation or relationship today did you most feel the pull towards 'you' thinking — and were you able to find a 'we' response, even partially?

Evening Prayer

Father, Son, and Spirit — you are the original 'we', the eternal community of love. Thank you for including me in that love. Forgive me where I was self-centred today. Renew my heart for others as I sleep, and give me fresh grace tomorrow to walk in the unity you bless. Amen.

Thursday - The God Who Comes Looking

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he rejoices and puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. (Luke 15:4-7 NIV)

Devotional Thought

One of the most tender threads running through the sermon is this: God brings back the ones who have drifted. This is not a footnote in the story of fellowship — it is central to it. Because the honest truth is that most of us, at some point in our lives, have drifted. We have fallen out of the habit of church. We have lost touch with Christian community. We have fallen out with other believers and let the distance grow. We have experienced something so painful or disillusioning that we quietly stepped back from the light, unsure whether we still belonged.

And into that reality comes the image of the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine and goes searching for the one. Not grudgingly. Not with a list of conditions for return. But urgently, joyfully, determinedly — until he finds the lost sheep and brings it home on his shoulders. This is the God we are dealing with. A God whose heart is always for confession and reconciliation, not distance and bitterness.

The sermon puts it with beautiful directness: 'However much we've fallen out of love with God or with others, if there is a flicker of a flame there, God's heart is always for confession and reconciliation.' That is extraordinary grace. A flicker is enough. A whisper of longing to return is enough. God does not wait for us to have it all sorted before he comes running.

And this shapes how we, as a fellowship, must treat those who have drifted from our midst. We are not a community that shuts the door on those who have stepped away. We are a community that goes looking — with warmth, without judgement, with the same urgent love that the shepherd showed. Is there someone in your church community who has quietly disappeared? Is there a friendship that has grown cold? Today might be the day to go looking.

Reflection Question

Have you ever drifted from Christian community — and what brought you back, or what is keeping you away? Is there someone in your fellowship who has drifted, whom God might be calling you to reach out to?

From Sunday's Sermon

"This is a God who goes looking for scattered people and brings them home. And that's a great invitation for us into fellowship, that however much we've fallen out of love with God or with others, that if there is a flicker of a flame there, God's heart is always for confession and reconciliation, not distance and bitterness."

Today's Application

Take a few minutes today to think about someone who has drifted from your church fellowship — someone you have not seen for a while, someone who seemed to quietly disappear. Pray for them specifically by name. Then consider whether God might be calling you to take a small, warm step towards them: a text message, a phone call, a handwritten note. Keep it simple and without pressure. You are not responsible for fixing their faith — but you can be the person who reminds them that they are missed and that there is a community that would love to welcome them back. Equally, if you yourself have drifted from Christian community, let today be the day you take one small step back towards the light — whether that is attending a service, contacting a church, or simply telling God honestly that you want to return.

Morning Prayer

Good Shepherd, thank you that you do not give up on your sheep. Thank you that when I have wandered, you have come looking for me — not with condemnation, but with joy. Soften my heart today towards those who have drifted from our fellowship. Give me the courage and the warmth to reach out, to go looking, to make the phone call or send the message. And where I myself have drifted in any way, draw me back — gently, persistently, lovingly. May your fellowship be a place of homecoming for all who have been away. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Devotion

The Joy of the Finding

Evening Reflection

The parable does not end with the finding. It ends with a party. 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' There is something deeply important about this. God's response to the return of a wanderer is not a quiet, relieved nod. It is celebration. There is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents, Jesus says, than over ninety-nine who do not need to. This tells us something vital about the heart of God: he is not merely relieved when the lost come home — he is overjoyed. And that joy is meant to be shared. Fellowship, at its best, is a community of people who celebrate one another's return and growth. A community where no one has to slink back in shame, but where the returning one is welcomed with genuine warmth. Tonight, consider whether your church fellowship carries this quality of joyful welcome. And consider whether your own heart is shaped more by the elder brother's resentment or the father's delight. God is always the father running down the road. He invites us to run with him.

Evening Reflection

How do you tend to respond when someone returns to faith or to fellowship after a period of absence — with genuine joy, with quiet judgement, or with something in between?

Evening Prayer

Lord, make me someone who celebrates the return of the wandering, not someone who keeps score. Fill my heart with your joy — the joy of the shepherd, the joy of the father. May our fellowship be a place of homecoming and celebration. Amen.

Friday - Little Children, Love One Another

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:34-35 NIV)

Devotional Thought

There is a story in the sermon that is worth sitting with for a long time. By the time John was a very old man — too frail to walk into church on his own — his friends would carry him in. And every time, this man who had walked with Jesus, who had leaned against him at the Last Supper, who had stood at the foot of the cross, who had run to the empty tomb — this man with a lifetime of extraordinary experience and deep theological insight — said the same six words: 'Little children, love one another.' When people asked him why he always said the same thing, he replied simply: 'Because it is the Lord's command. If only this is done, it is enough.'

If only this is done, it is enough. Let that land. All the theology, all the doctrine, all the biblical knowledge in the world — and the aged apostle distils it to this. Love one another. Not as a sentimental feeling, but as a daily, costly, practical choice. As Jesus loved us — which means all the way to the cross.

This is the culmination of everything we have explored this week. We have seen that God is light and calls us into his light. We have seen that he gathers a people not because of their merit but because of his love. We have explored the 'we' language of fellowship, the God who comes looking for the lost, and now we arrive at the irreducible heart of it all: love one another. Not just those who are easy to love. Not just those who share our background or our opinions. But one another — the whole glorious, difficult, diverse, sometimes frustrating community of people whom God has gathered around himself.

And this love, Jesus says, is the mark by which the world will know that we belong to him. Not our buildings, not our programmes, not our theological precision — but our love for one another. This is the most powerful testimony the church can offer to a lonely, divided world. And it begins with the simplest of things: learning someone's name, asking how their week has been, offering to pray, turning up even when it is easier not to.

Reflection Question

If someone observed your relationships within your church community over the past month, would they see love that is genuinely costly and consistent — or something more intermittent and comfortable? What is one specific way you could love more practically this week?

From Sunday's Sermon

"Little children love one another... because it's the Lord's command. If only this is done, it's enough. If only this is done, it's enough. That's, in a nutshell, the kind of belonging that Jesus calls us into when we belong as a church fellowship."

Today's Application

As you come to the end of this week's devotional journey, make a short, concrete list of three people in your church fellowship and one specific way you will love them practically in the coming week. Be specific: not 'be nicer to them' but 'learn their name and ask how they are on Sunday', or 'send them a message to say I am praying for them', or 'offer to help with something I know they are struggling with'. Then, as a longer-term commitment, consider how you might invest more consistently in your church community: turning up even when it is easier not to, inviting someone on the margins into conversation, asking someone how their week has really been — not just about the weather. Fellowship is not complicated. But it is costly. And it is worth it. Because it is the Lord's command. And if only this is done, it is enough.

Morning Prayer

Lord Jesus, you loved us all the way to the cross. You loved the difficult ones, the doubting ones, the ones who betrayed you and the ones who ran away. You love us still — with a love that is patient and persistent and utterly undeserved. Teach me to love like that. Not just in feeling, but in action. Not just the easy ones, but the ones I find hard. Give me your eyes for the people around me in my church family — to see them as you see them, to value them as you value them, to love them as you have loved me. May our fellowship be a light in this world — a community so marked by love that the watching world cannot help but ask what holds us together. And may our answer always be: Christ. In his name, Amen.

Evening Devotion

Enough

Evening Reflection

As this week draws to a close, return one more time to those six words: 'Little children, love one another.' And to that extraordinary claim: if only this is done, it is enough. In a world that constantly tells us we need to do more, achieve more, be more — there is something profoundly restful about that word 'enough'. Not that love is easy or undemanding. But that it is sufficient. It is the thing. Everything else — all the structures, all the activities, all the programmes — exist to serve this. And this week, you have been invited to practise it in small, faithful ways: stepping into the light, seeing others as gathered by grace, choosing 'we' over 'you', going looking for the lost, and loving practically and consistently. None of these things are dramatic. All of them are real. And as you rest tonight, know that God is pleased with every small, faithful act of love you have offered this week — to him and to others. You are walking in the light. You are part of the fellowship. And that is enough.

Evening Reflection

As you look back over this week, what has shifted in how you understand or experience Christian fellowship — and what one thing do you want to carry forward into the week ahead?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you for this week — for your light, your grace, your gathering love. Thank you for the community of faith you have placed me in. Help me to love them well. Help me to keep showing up, keep learning names, keep asking the real questions, keep praying and helping and turning up. May our fellowship be a sign of your kingdom in this world. And may it always begin with you. Amen.