

# His Fellowship

## *Knowing Your Counselor:*

1 Corinthians 12:1-13, 14:26-33

June 20, 2010

Wesley J. Gabel

Bethany Church

Who you hang with makes a difference! One expert claims that if you identify your five closest friends, you can see your future. If your closest friends struggle with marriage, you will struggle with marriage. If they maintain a bad diet, you'll have a bad diet. If they speak coarsely using vulgar words, you'll think and speak that way. We are profoundly influenced by other people.

I always enjoyed math in high school and college. However, I struggled with one college math course. I would get to class and work from the moment I sat down until the moment I was dismissed. It seemed I was always a blackboard behind in the lecture, and too busy writing to think about what I heard. However, I would reread all the notes and study carefully for each exam, yet I scored low. I would then work and study even harder and get the same poor results. I was really discouraged because sitting next to me, relaxed and listening intently, was my high school class valedictorian. I always thought I was bright and quick, but I began to doubt. As the semester neared its end and the day for the final test approached, I was invited to a study session with some students, who excelled in the course. I learned why the valedictorian and these students excelled. They had fellowship with previous students in the class. They learned what material was important; and they had in their possession old tests, which revealed exactly what the professor wanted his students to know and demonstrate. After working through the problems

on the old test, I was prepared and scored an “A” on the final exam, raising my course grade to a “C”. That is the positive power of fellowship. It gives you *resources, perspective, and abilities* in your life that eventually result in a different outcome.

The reason Jesus gives believers the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, is so that they will have fellowship with God and therefore *resources, perspective and abilities* that create a different life and outcome. The Bible states:

***God... has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*** (1 Corinthians 1:9, NIV)

This fellowship with Jesus is through the Holy Spirit, the Counselor. In his final words to Christians at Corinth, Paul blesses them saying:

***May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*** (2 Corinthians 13:14, NIV)

I frequently use that blessing with you all. I want you to experience this fellowship with the Spirit, which is very personal, but not private. The Apostle John wrote:

***We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*** (1 John 1:3, NIV)

If you believe the good news of Jesus, you will have fellowship with believers who have fellowship with God the Father and God the Son through the Holy Spirit. Consequently, as you fellowship with believers, you begin to fellowship with the Holy Spirit. This is God’s design. The Holy Spirit baptizes us all into one body. He immerses us all into a single body where together we have an identity and individually we have a role. The Bible teaches that the manifestation of the Spirit, the revelation of God’s presence, is given to different parts of the body for the common good. Consequently, fellowship with God is not a private thing. It is a social thing. It involves relating to believing people.

The Apostle John wrote:

***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 1:7, NIV)

If you believe in Jesus and believe and act on Jesus' teaching (that is walking in the light), you will relate closely to other believers, doing things, learning things, and sharing things. As you fellowship and continue the fellowship, the blood of Jesus becomes useful. It begins to touch every area of life and remove the toxin of sin.

For our own health and life and relationship with God, it is so important that we hang together. Listen to this appeal:

***If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*** (Philippians 2:1-4, NIV)

These words are God's plea to you. Our Counselor is saying, "Be my people, not just an individual. Be like-minded. Have the same love. Be one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of your personal ambition; and don't think you know better. Esteem others. Look to their interests; not just your own." What does this mean?

What prevents us from esteeming others and truly experiencing fellowship where God directs us? I think we suffer from something that traps me now and then. I've succumb on occasion to *expert-itis*. *Expert-itis* is an unwise attitude that assumes people must be academically credentialed or humanly endorsed in order to have something important to say. Did you know that none of the twelve disciples Jesus chose were academically credentialed? Listen to how *expert-itis* affected the religious leaders of Jerusalem:

***When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13, NIV)***

I understand the desire to screen what we give attention to. We all have limited time to invest. Therefore, it is natural to ask ourselves, “Why should I set aside time to listen to this person? Is what they say worth the time?” When we succumb to *expert-itis*, we rely upon a human credential rather than a divine one. What Peter and John had to say was worth the time of the listener, not because they were educated or gifted, but because they had been with Jesus.

The Holy Spirit tells us in 1 Corinthians 12 that we believers are divinely connected to one another for mutual benefit and a godly purpose. When we set aside time and listen to one another, we are fulfilling what God intends. Each believer is credentialed with the Holy Spirit to speak. Thus, our Counselor commands us through the writing of Paul:

***When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. (1 Corinthians 14:26, NIV)***

Fellowship with our Counselor means listening to everyone. Everyone has a hymn, word, revelation. As you read on, you discover that ordinary people, multiple people, are prophesying. Those not prophesying are testing it. They ask questions like: “Is what they say Scriptural? Is it consistent with the character of God? Is the Spirit confirming it in my heart?”

The gifts and ministry are for both women and men, but the Spirit led the church to place some restrictions on the ministry of women to safeguard moral relationships and limit the offensiveness of their practices to the people they are trying to reach. Women were not second class, however. God made the Christian church at Caesarea known for the four daughters of Phillip who lived there and prophesied. Fellowship with the Spirit entailed receiving the ministry of these four women.

Is hearing from God hard for you? When it comes to knowing the Holy Spirit, the Counselor Jesus gives you, are you as frustrated as I was with math? Who are you hanging with? Who are your friends? Are they hearing and being directed by the Counselor? You can ask God for help. He does respond; however, are you resisting the help he sends you.

I recall a newspaper cartoon called *Beatle Bailey*. Sergeant Snorkel hung from a tree jutting out of a cliff. He asked God for help. As soon as he finished praying, Private Zero showed up with a rope and tossed one end down. The sergeant grabbed it. Then Private Zero yelled, "Let go of the tree." There was a pause, and another prayer. Then the sergeant asked meekly, "Is someone else up there?"

God sent me a math study group. God answered my prayers through their help. There is a new group forming this summer to help you rethink your life. Could this be God's help? It will meet four times between our worship services. It is called: Rethink Your Life: a Study of Acts. The dates are posted for you. Understand, if you fellowship with us, you will fellowship with God.