

Spiritual Gifts: *Fellowship*

Daniel Borchers

April 28, 2002

Spiritual Gift of Fellowship

Aloha. Praise the Lord!

As you can tell by the bulletin, Paul James was scheduled to speak today on the gift of service. Instead, I'll be speaking to you about the gift of fellowship. This turns out to be fitting as Richard Andrews' sermon is entitled, "God's Spiritual House – Our Community."

We have heard many sermons about fellowship and its importance in the church. The Bible speaks about it throughout the New Testament. Though it is not listed *as* a spiritual gift, in a sense it *is* a spiritual gift. Our pastor, Peter Whitting, has observed that our congregation has indeed been blessed with the gift of fellowship.

The gift of fellowship is closely related to many of the other spiritual gifts, such as hospitality, mercy, giving and serving. In fact, *without* this gift it would be difficult to use any of the other spiritual gifts. Here are a few Scriptural references to fellowship:

Acts 2:42	And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship
1 st Corinthians 1:9	fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord
Galatians 2:9	right hand of fellowship
Philippians 1:5	fellowship in the gospel
Philippians 2:1	fellowship of the Spirit
Philippians 3:10	fellowship of His sufferings
1 st John 1:3	that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

This gift of fellowship – fellowship in the *gospel*, fellowship of the *Spirit*, fellowship of His *sufferings*, and fellowship with our heavenly *Father* and *Jesus Christ* – this gift of fellowship is all accomplished as an *answer* to Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-23.

John 17:20-23	"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."
---------------	--

The gift of fellowship is an *extension* of the already miraculous life we have in Jesus: God in us and us in God.

The gift of fellowship ...

- ◆ brings us into contact with each other so that we can use the other gifts God has given us
- ◆ builds bridges of understanding and peace
- ◆ promotes healing and reconciliation between people
- ◆ enables us to share our joys and burdens with one another
- ◆ provides opportunities to praise and worship God and His providence in our lives

As with the other spiritual gifts, there must be a balance with fellowship – a right time and a proper place. We see this tension between fellowship and worship at the beginning of services each week. We come here to praise God and we have a call to worship portion of services where members do worship God. At the same time many members are still excitedly fellowshiping with one another. This is a difficult balance to maintain.

Peter has said that he would like us all to be involved in the *call to worship* – to be part of the process of coming before God in preparation for services – but at the same time he doesn't want to quench the *spirit of fellowship*, a spirit gifted by God to us.

As for fellowship, I like this song: "We Will Stand." If we had the song, I would play it for you right now. Let me read to you the words from one stanza:

"You're my brother, you're my sister, so take me by the hand.
Together we will work till He comes.
There's no foe that can defeat us as we're walking side by side.
As long as there is love, we will stand."

Yes, the Worldwide Church of God has always understood that we are family.

I like this song because it recognizes that we all – *every one of us!* – share the brotherhood of Jesus. We are all one despite differences of race, class, gender, background, political persuasion, personality traits or any of the other things in life which tend to separate people.

We are all children of God.

This song also expresses confidence of victory in unity and it realizes that that most important thing we share is love.

Please stand and join hands as we sing:

"You're my brother, you're my sister, so take me by the hand.
Together we will work till He comes.
There's no foe that can defeat us as we're walking side by side.
As long as there is love, we will stand."

Let us pray:

Dear Father, dear Jesus, dear Holy Spirit: We thank You that You have hidden our lives in Yours. We thank You for the fellowship that we have with You now – and will have with You throughout eternity. And we thank You for the gift of fellowship that You have blessed us with here today, in this life, in this congregation. Thank You, Jesus, for being our all in all. Thank You for encompassing our lives with your own and living within each one of us. May we use the gifts You have given to us for Your glory and may we never cease to praise and honor You and to rejoice in Your presence and Your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.