

How to Walk in the Spirit

Part 3

Introduction

In the first two parts of this study, we learned the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit, reading the Bible, and blooming where we're planted. In this part, we will see the importance of fellowship with other Christians and learning to recognize Jesus' voice.

Our Study

4. Find fellowship

The Scripture: Acts 2:42

"They (believers) devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

1. What did the believers do? _____

2. What is the verb used here? _____

The dictionary gives the synonyms "dedicated" and "concentrated" for "devoted", indicating how important the early believers considered fellowshiping, not just for teaching but for companionship as well. The Christian life is not lived in a vacuum. Christian relationships provide an essential means for our growing and maturing.

It is essential that each Christian have fellowship with other Christians by becoming involved in a church or at least a small group wherever it is possible. Our fellow Christians teach us, witness to us, reprove us when necessary, share our joys and sorrows, and edify us through their spiritual gifts. By submitting to a pastor or elder, and fellow Christians, we are kept in balance. Consequently, we are less likely to be misled by false doctrines or to fall for the lures and lies of Satan.

Recently, when a well-publicized Korean cultist conducted a series of rallies in different areas, the pastors of those cities were able to point out to their congregations the heresies in his message. Largely because of these warnings, the rallies were a failure. Today, perhaps more than in any other time in history, the individual Christian needs the covering and protection provided by a church.

If you do not presently belong to a church, visit several before you make your choice. Find out what each particular church stands for. Do you share their beliefs? Their practices? Do the members truly believe in the lordship of Christ, the authority of the Scriptures, the trinity--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? These are very serious considerations and you should not join a church whose doctrines and practices you cannot wholeheartedly support. If you are presently in a church which gives you little or

no edifying fellowship and yet feel the Lord would have you stay there, you can know that the Lord will use you as a blessing and as a help working out His plans in the situation. But, you will also need to receive food and fellowship on a regular basis from other Spirit-filled believers.

The Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:14

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers....What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever."

3. What is Paul's instruction in this verse? _____

4. Why? _____

Paul makes some exceptions, which you can see by reading the entire chapter.

The Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:26

"Think of what you were when you were called."

5. What does Paul remind the believers of? _____

Many of us came from very unsavory pasts. To continue our association with the people we fellowshiped with before we were Christians is not only unprofitable, but may be dangerous as well.

The Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:14

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

6. Who are we to have fellowship with? _____

Jesus said it was expedient for Him to return to heaven, so the Father could send the Holy Spirit to earth. While Jesus was limited in a way to influencing those He came in contact with, the Holy Spirit could actually indwell the believers.

How do we have fellowship with the Holy Spirit? By praise, prayer, and meditation. Polls show that people, even Christians, spend only a few minutes a day in prayer and reading their Bibles. This is tragic, because our fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit is dependent on our spending time with Him.

Let us remember to fellowship with the Holy Spirit more and more.

5. Learn to Know the Lord's Voice

The Scripture: John 10:4-5

"He (the shepherd) calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. When He has brought out all His own, He goes on ahead of them, and His sheep follow Him because they know His voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

7. How well does the shepherd know His sheep? _____

8. Why do the sheep follow Him? _____

9. How will they behave toward a stranger? _____

In eastern countries, different flocks of sheep sometime graze or are watered together. The sheep, indistinguishable one from one another, mingle freely. However, each shepherd has his own particular call which his own sheep know. When a shepherd calls, his sheep separate themselves from all the others and follow him.

If you haven't yet learned to distinguish your shepherd's voice from all the other voices that clamor for your attention, don't despair. It's the mature sheep who know His voice, not the lambs. Getting to know the Lord's voice takes time, experience, and training.

The Scripture: 2 Corinthians 11:14

"Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."

10. How can Satan appear? _____

As an angel of light, Satan often gives us lots of ideas to keep us sidetracked. There is also the flesh to be reckoned with (our own thoughts and desires), plus the well-intentioned suggestions of our friends.

One man thought he was doing the Lord's will by hiring a large auditorium each month and preaching the gospel. After sending a considerable amount of money and seeing few results, he finally had to admit that his idea had been an "ego trip" rather than the leading of the Lord.

Before we act on any "words from the Lord" we must make sure they pass three tests:

- A. Do our spirits personally witness to them?
- B. Do they agree with Scripture?
- C. Do circumstances permit us to act upon them?

Frequently, we can add a fourth test.

The Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:1

"Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

11. How is every matter established? _____

If the guidance does not meet with at least the first three criteria, then we shouldn't act upon it. Particularly, we should never act upon any "words" from someone else that our spirits do not personally witness to. Much grief and heartache would be spared Christians if only they would realize that the Lord does not ask them to do anything He has not personally confirmed.

One middle-aged well-to-do widow let herself be convinced by her prayer group's prophesy that she was to marry a very attractive, but unstable young man much younger than she, although she had many doubts. The marriage was a tragic mistake, and after spending much of her money, the young man deserted her.

The Scripture: 1 John 4:1-3

"Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God. Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God."

12. How do we test the spirits? _____

The Scripture: 1 Corinthians 14:29 in the New American Standard Bible

"Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment"

13. What should be our standard for prophecy? _____

As we move along in the Spirit-filled life, we will become more expert in recognizing the Lord's voice. One bit of knowledge that has proved very helpful is this: Satan condemns, the Holy Spirit convicts.

A world of difference exists between condemnation and conviction. Satan's condemnation nags and gnaws. There is no relief from it, no matter which way we turn. The Spirit, on the other hand, convicts us in the small quiet voice of God that leads to repentance, forgiveness, and cleansing.

In these latter days the Lord is doing a quick work in His people. Properly nourished and correctly trained, the Christian can quickly grow into spiritual adulthood.

The Answers

1. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship and the breaking of bread.
2. Devoted
3. Not to be yoked to unbelievers
4. Because they have nothing in common with unbelievers
5. What they were like before they became Christians
6. The Holy Spirit
7. He knows them by name.
8. Because they know His voice
9. They will run away from him.
10. As an angel of light
11. Confirmation by witnesses
12. They must acknowledge that Jesus has come in the flesh from God
13. It must be judged by other prophets.

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