

TRUTH & RIGHT

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COMPANIONSHIP

I spent a fair number of hours last week watching and listening to an Internet broadcast of the international barbershop quartet championships from Salt Lake City. During the four days of competition, I heard a lot of excellent singing and saw some amazing performances. When I grow up, I hope to be as good a singer as some of those who graced the stage.

If you've ever heard barbershop harmony done well, you understand something of the precision that's required. All four voices have to contribute just the right pitch, volume, timbre, and word

sound in exactly the right balance in order to produce barbershop's characteristic "ringing" quality. It looks easy — and indeed, anyone who can carry a tune can learn to do it to some degree — but it really is quite challenging to create the music well. Experienced singers in other genres of music will often tell you that singing barbershop is more demanding in its own way than even opera singing is.

One thing about barbershop is immutable: You can't do it by yourself. Oh, sure, you can sing a barbershop melody solo — most of the songs in the barbershop lexicon are familiar tunes most

Americans (at least, those over a certain age) have heard before — but try as you might, you can't make that distinctive sound without at least three other people to sing the other parts that make up the harmony.

Many things in life are like singing barbershop — you can't do them alone. A good part of that is due to the fact that God made us human beings to be social creatures who depend upon the interaction of others of our kind. In fact, one of the first recorded observations of God regarding humankind is, *"It is not good that man should be alone"* (Genesis 2:18).

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon comments on the value of companionship: *"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they*

will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Sometimes people wonder why they should be active in a local church. After all, aren't we each individually responsible to God (2 Corinthians 5:10)? Will we not stand or fall before him based upon our own actions (Romans 14:4; 1 Corinthians 3:8-15)?

All of these are true, but it is also true that God in His wisdom created the church because He knew it was not good for us to attempt to serve Him alone. Even Jesus surrounded Himself with twelve other men whose company He treasured, and whom He called friends. Paul, as he went about preaching the gospel, was almost always accompanied by others — at various times his companions included Barnabas, Timothy, Luke, Silas, John Mark, and

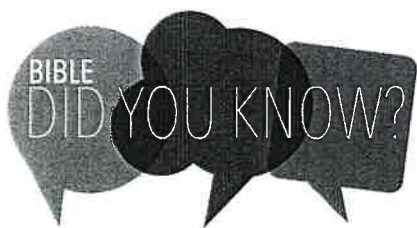
many more whose names appear in Paul's letters. Paul knew that these brethren were valuable not only to his work, but also to him personally (2 Timothy 1:3-4; 4:11; Philippians 2:19-30).

One of the qualities that characterized early Christians was their desire to be together: *"So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people"* (Acts 2:46-47). When the apostles suffered persecution, they immediately sought out their fellows in faith (Acts 4:23; 12:12).

When children learn to swim, they're taught the "buddy system" — each swimmer has a companion who watches out for his or her safety, and for whose safety he or she is expected to watch out. The fellowship of the local assembly of the saints is

God's divine system for providing the support and encouragement we need to keep from drowning spiritually. *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Romans 12:10).

— Michael D. Rankins



John had untrue gossip spread about him never dying. "So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, 'Lord, and what about this man?' Jesus said to him, 'If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!' Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, 'If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?' This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true." John 21:21-24

BIBLE TRIVIA

C H A L L E N G E

DIRECTIONS: After searching through your Bible, circle which answer is correct.

1. A prophet is not without honor except here:

- a) Dwight's basement
- b) Peggy D's
- c) His hometown
- d) The synagogue

2. When commissioned to preach, Jesus told the Apostles to take nothing but to wear this:

- a) A fanny pack
- b) A tunic
- c) Sandals
- d) A top hat

3. Herod thought miracles were evidence this person had risen from the dead:

- a) Tiglath-pileser
- b) Abraham
- c) Moses
- d) John the Baptist

4. He said, "He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death":

- a) Moses
- b) Isaiah
- c) Jeremiah
- d) John the Baptist

5. Jesus said this to a deaf mute man:

- a) Open sesame
- b) Abra cadabra
- c) Can you hear me now?
- d) Ephphatha

6. The gentile woman whose daughter had a demon was this race:

- a) Syrophoenician
- b) Egyptian
- c) Philistine
- d) Assyrian

7. Jesus was afraid to send 4,000 hungry people away for fear they would do this:

- a) Riot
- b) Cry
- c) Faint
- d) Die

8. After feeding 4,000, Pharisees came demanding this from Jesus:

- a) A sermon
- b) Sign from Heaven
- c) Money
- d) Food

9. Jesus told His disciples to beware of this from the Pharisees and Herod:

- a) Violence
- b) Shrewdness
- c) Power
- d) Leaven

10. The first time a blind man was touched by Jesus, he said men looked like this before seeing clearly:

- a) Lions
- b) Donkeys
- c) Trees
- d) Stars

- 1) C, Reference: Mk. 6:4
 2) C, Reference: Mk. 6:8-9
 3) D, Reference: Mk. 6:13-16
 4) A, Reference: Mk. 7:10
 5) D, Reference: Mk. 7:34
 6) A, Reference: Mk. 7:24-26
 7) C, Mk. 8:1-3
 8) B, Mk. 8:11
 9) D, Mk. 8:14-15
 10) C, Mk. 8:23-24

ANSWERS & VERSES: