

## (1.8) Familiarity

*Do not open your heart to all comers*<sup>1</sup> and be careful with persons who are not fearing of God; seek those who show wisdom in their fear of God.

Be with the young when they need help while *before a stranger do nothing that should be kept secret, for you do not know what it will produce later on.*<sup>2</sup>

Do not cater to the rich and powerful and avoid the presence of those who are considered high and mighty in this world. *Limit the time you spend among the stupid, but frequent the company of the thoughtful*<sup>3</sup> who are humble, devout, orderly and knowledgeable of things that are spiritually edifying.

We should have love towards all persons but familiarity with all is not beneficial; commend all good persons, male or female, to God. *Seek closeness to spiritual things, with God and his angels; those who are living by their natural inclinations have their minds on the things human nature desires; those who live in the Spirit have their minds on spiritual things.*<sup>4</sup>

Sometimes, people unknown to us come highly commended by others, but when we meet them they do not live up to their reputations. In a similar vein we sometimes think that we please others but much to our surprise they may see our shortcomings and be displeased with us.

Think of the Scribes and the Pharisees, who considered themselves as enlightened spiritual leaders, and how often they were taken aback with the responses of Jesus. *Jesus understood that many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he did, but Jesus knew all people and did not trust himself to them.*<sup>5</sup>



This article is based on Book 1, Chapter 8 of Thomas of Kempis' writing, "Imitation of Christ." It is not a translation, and there are many of those, but a personal (layperson's) reflection on his writing: if any of it helps give credit to Thomas of Kempis; if any of it fails the responsibility is mine. ( rfm)

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<sup>1</sup> Sirach 8:19

<sup>2</sup> Sirach 8:18

<sup>3</sup> Sirach 27:12

<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:5

<sup>5</sup> John 2:23-24