

Devoted to Fellowship

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42, NIV)

*Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A **cord of three** strands is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:12, NIV)*

You and I weren't made to go it alone. We were created for relationship. If you've lived long enough, you've probably already come to that conclusion.

When John Wesley laid out the basic discipleship practices (faith habits) for the early Methodists, he decided that Fellowship was an essential **means of grace**. That's in addition to other means of grace we've covered, such as Searching the Scriptures, Prayer, Fasting, and so on.

Today, when we use the word, Fellowship, what do we often think of? Probably something along the lines of coming together for the purpose of spending time together. Often that involves sharing a meal. Maybe it's connected to a special event taking place in our fellowship hall. Those are all wonderful ways that we get to know each other and begin to grow in our relationships. But, deep down, there's a part of us that hungers for more from our relationships.

Did you know that when Wesley used the term, Fellowship, he was thinking of something even deeper than what we tend to think of today? He described the character of what he called "True Fellowship" by asking these fundamental questions:

"Who watched over them in love? Who marked their growth in grace? Who advised and exhorted them from time to time? Who prayed with them and for them as they had need? This, and this alone is Christian fellowship."

When I start to think about fellowship this way, it makes me think of a group of pastors that I meet with monthly for several hours of conversation and prayer. In this group, I feel safe enough to share about my life on a deeper level. I know that the men I gather with will encourage and pray for me, but also challenge and push me in my spiritual life, and do it all in a confidential way. As a disciple of Jesus, I have the sense that God's grace is at work in my life after these gatherings.

Do you have a group of people in your life that watch over you in love? Who track the way grace works in your life? Who give helpful advice and push you to become more Christ-like? Who will pray for you in your hour of need?

My prayer is that every person in our congregation would have such a place - a group of trusted friends in Christ. And that we would be willing to give of ourselves to help others receive the grace of God in those kinds of groups. So how do we get to that place? I think we can start by learning from our Methodist heritage.

Wesley had names for these grace-groups. Among them were Classes and Bands. Want to know more? This Sunday morning in worship, I'll share about these groups and how they allow the means of grace of fellowship to flow into our lives. We might even start to ask ourselves how we could create groups like these that work in today's world.

See you there!

Grace and Peace,

Pastor David

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