



*Pastor David Koch*

## **Becoming Fully Devoted Followers of Christ**

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### **Introduction:**

We have been focused on the mission of Christian Life Fellowship Church which is to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ within the context of the family of God. Over the past two weeks our spiritual journey has taken us back to the place where we connect with God. This morning we want to explore our connection with others in the body of Christ in significant relationships. As we look at the importance of small groups, remember that the purpose for these groups is to grow and build community. **Acts 2:46-47 -They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.**

In the book of Acts we see there were three components that were critical to the believers. It was these three components that actually helped them grow in their faith, helped sustain them in time of persecution and helped them to become fully devoted in following Christ. These three components also help believers today in their devotedness to Christ and their spiritual formation.

- 1. The connection they had with God**
- 2. The role of community and being active in small groups**
- 3. The way they found relevance and impact by serving the community.**

One of the opportunities we have in this life is to share the journey we are on with other people. No man is an island; no man stands alone. In the world we live in, we are all aware of how important relationships are. Our whole world is connected through facebook, twitter, the internet etc. We live in a global community and the

social networking that takes place through the medium of technology is incredible. People want to connect, they want to have friends and build relationships. People want to belong and they want to be a part of a community.

In studying the life of Christ, I am impressed over and over with the importance He placed on relationships. Relationships are the glue that bonds people together. It is relationships that make people stick together when the going gets tough. The most important relationship you can develop on earth is your relationship with God. We have talked about that for the past two Sundays. As important as the relationship with Christ is, we all know that is not the only relationship we are called to develop.

### **I. Devoted followers met in homes for the Lord's Supper.**

Jesus told His disciples that as often as they ate the bread and drank the cup together, they were to remember Him. The small groups that met in homes shared together in remembering the Lord but it was their togetherness that cemented the relationships. It is impossible to go through life without connecting and interacting with people. Part of Jesus' earthly ministry was to connect with people and help them build relationships with those around them.

Matthew's gospel records the call that Jesus extended to 12 men to follow him. **Matthew 10:1- Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness.** We call them disciples. Today we would define Jesus' disciples as a small group. In a small group, the relationships that develop help bring about growth. Building community happens within the structure and interaction that takes place in small groups.

Lets' face it. Sunday morning we have opportunity to connect with God and have brief interchanges with people. If we are going to build relationships with people which build community, that process has to happen at another time and in a more personable, intimate and manageable way. My relationship with each of you cannot grow deep simply by worshipping in front of you on Sunday morning. Building relationships that last takes time, transparency, honesty and commitment. The Holy Spirit helps bond us together but the joys, sorrows, challenges, sins and victories that we share with other people are also common threads that connect us to each other and help build community.

Jesus modeled the small group idea with the disciples. They went to the temple to pray together,

they went to the temple to worship together but they also ate their meals together, they fished together, they worked together, they discussed the principles of Christ's teachings together and they served together, not at the synagogue but in their homes and in the community.

So.....If we want to become fully devoted followers of Christ, we'll connect with God but we'll also build community through relationships that are developed in small groups. In a few weeks we are going to be launching two new small groups. One of these groups will function weekly here at CLF on Sunday morning during the growth hour, the other one will function every other week on Tuesday night from 6:00 – 7:15p.m.

### **II. Devoted followers shared their meals together.**

The early church did this probably weekly if not more often than that. The purpose for that was to cement their relationships. The purpose for all small groups is to build community by taking relationships to a deeper level. These groups are for people who are currently not in a small group. The Sunday morning group is not competing with the two growth classes that meet. Please respect that if you already attend a small group, don't sign up to belong to another one. These small groups will function through December. At that point everyone in both groups will have the opportunity to stay or change groups. The groups will discuss the sermon from the prior Sunday and how it can be applied in a practical way to our lives. There are many statements in the New Testament that instruct us as to our relating to one another. These instructions are best fulfilled in the framework of a healthy small group. So let's look at some of these during the next two weeks.

### **III. Devoted followers practiced the "one - another directives".**

## Love one another.

The directive to love one another comes from the Lord Himself. To love another person means we have to look beyond ourselves. When people truly love and care about each other, they are respected, valued and not overlooked.

**John 13:34-35 - So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.** Jesus came to connect with us. He identified with us in our humanity, in our weakness, in our selfishness, in our sinful passions and yet he came to build community.

To love one another calls us to the point of serving each other. It calls us to look beyond our shortcomings, for love covers the multitude of sins. It calls us to act selflessly. Love has to have eyes that can see needs in order to act and demonstrate itself toward the need.

**Hebrews 13:1- Continue to love each other with true Christian love.** True Christian love will put itself out for someone else. It will lift up the fallen, it will heal the broken, it will sacrifice itself for another. To get to this level and depth of love takes more than a high five on Sunday morning.

God knew the best way to demonstrate His love toward us human beings was by sending His Son Jesus. He knew that not only because He made us but because He is close to us. He wants a relationship that goes beyond, "Hi, how are you?"

People respond to love that is directed at them personally. Love doesn't know the boundaries of a small group, but it truly can be practiced there. **1 Peter 4:8-Most important of all, continue to show**

## Conclusion:

We need each other. However, it is impossible for any one of us to connect deeply with all 350 people who consider this their church home. The best thing we can do to help you become fully devoted followers of Christ is to offer you the opportunity to connect with a small group of people and journey with them. A small group gives us the opportunity to deepen our relationship with others and practice these "one- another" directives from scripture. As we build community, we will become stronger and we will grow. People will stick together through good and bad times because they go beyond just being together to connect with God.

deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. **1 John 3:11- This is the message we have heard from the beginning: We should love one another.**

**Be devoted to one another. Honor one another.**

**Romans 12:10-Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.** If you truly love someone you will have genuine affection for them. With that affection, comes delight in honoring that person.

We are made in the image of God. We cannot honor God and not honor those who are made in His image. We cannot honor God and not honor those who are His children.

**1 Cor 13 -** gives us the qualities of love. Love is kind, love is not rude, not selfish, doesn't boast, is not proud, it is not easily offended, does not demand its own way. In other words, love looks out for others. Love never fails.

**Live in harmony with one another.**

**1 Peter 3:8 - Finally, everyone must live in harmony, be sympathetic, love each other, have compassion, and be humble.** Harmony in music means to complement the melody or the main part. The harmony adds another layer of sound that complements and strengthens and enhances the main part. That is how we are to live. Live to complement the main part of others. Live in such a way that what you do adds a layer of beauty to others' lives. Be sympathetic, have compassion and be humble. Those things are best done in a small group setting. **Col. 1:10 - Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and you will continually do good, kind things for others. All the while, you will learn to know God better and better.**

My challenge to you this morning is to give thought to joining one of these two new small groups we will be starting in a couple of weeks. Each group will be limited to a total of 10 people. If you join one of these groups we are going to ask you to make the commitment to meet every time your small group meets. In other words, don't join the group and then go once or twice. Make the commitment to build community by taking an active part in the group and connecting to others.