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

*September 13, 2009*

### **Introduction:**

We have been considering the mission of Christian Life Fellowship Church over the past few Sundays. **Acts 2:42-43** -**They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord's Supper and in prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.**

We have talked about becoming fully devoted followers within the context of the family of God. In order to do this, we must connect with God in worship on Sunday and connect with God personally through the week. We also must build community and be involved with small groups.

On September 1<sup>st</sup> I read this in one of my devotional books: "If your friends aren't friends, make new friends." If the people close to you are dragging you down, then it may be time to make some changes. Speaker Joe Larson remarked, "My friends didn't believe that I could become a successful speaker, so I did something about it. I went out and found me some new friends!"

When you really think about it, the things that matter most in life are the relationships we develop. Remember:

- You may build a beautiful house, but eventually it will crumble.
- You may develop a fine career, but one day it will be over.
- You may save a great sum of money, but you can't take it with you.
- You may be in superb health today, but in time it will decline.
- You may take pride in your accomplishments, but someone will surpass you.

Discouraged? Don't be, for the one thing that really matters, lasts forever – your friendships. Life is too long to spend it with people who pull you in the wrong direction. And it's too short not to invest in others. Your relationships will define you. And they will influence your talent – one way or the other. Choose wisely.

This morning we are going to look at some of the other important aspects of being in a small group. God thought so much about the importance of small groups and that is why he fashioned the family. The family is a small group. How it functions is up to the individuals who are part of that family. In a family and in a small group, each person has importance. Every person who is part of a family contributes to that small group. I've said it before that God has a purpose for each person. He has a plan and a purpose and it is important that each person function in the role and purpose for which they were designed. That means that you need to actively seek to find out what your gifts are and what you do best to strengthen the small group you are part of and to build up your family.

### **I. Devoted followers of Christ encourage one another.**

Even children can encourage others. A few weeks ago, I came out of my office and two young girls who come to Wednesday High Point had written me notes. The notes were encouraging to me. Everyone young or old, successful and less-than-successful, famous and unknown, who receive encouragement is changed by it. Mark Twain said, "One compliment can keep me going for a whole month." A word of encouragement from a teacher can change a child's life. A word of encouragement from a spouse can strengthen or even save a marriage. A word of encouragement from a leader can inspire a person to reach his or her potential. You have no idea what a word of encouragement will do for someone

Everyone can be an encourager. We are to encourage one another. **Hebrews 3:13 -But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the Day approaching.**

### **II. Devoted followers of Christ accept one another.**

**Romans 15:7 - So accept each other just as Christ has accepted you; then God will be glorified.** For the devoted follower of Christ, one of the most important goals of our lives is to glorify God. By accepting one another as Christ has accepted us, God is glorified. For a small group to function and for us

to grow community, we have to learn how to accept each other. We all have bumps, scars, wounds, deficiencies, talents, abilities, and gifts and we have to learn how to accept one another just as we are. Don't expect me to look at life just like you do and I won't expect you will look at life exactly like I do.

In the family of God, there is great variety and diversity. If Jesus accepts us the way we are, then we must be willing to accept each other the way we are. In a small group, we are vulnerable. In a large group, it is easy to hide. It is easy not to be noticed, not to be seen, to be invisible. But in a small group, each person is noticed. Each person can be seen for who they are. Join a small group and let other people see who you really are. One cannot help but grow in a small group. You grow spiritually, you grow relationally, you grow intellectually and you grow socially.

### **III. Devoted followers of Christ instruct one another.**

**Col. 3:16 - Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach and counsel each other. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.** One of the things that happen in a small group is that those who have walked with the Lord for many years are able to instruct those who have not walked with the Lord as long. The right place to instruct each other is in small groups. It is easy and appropriate to ask questions in a small group. One can truly grow in knowledge and understanding of the word and how to apply its principles to our life by the instruction we receive from one another.

#### **IV. Devoted followers of Christ serve one another.**

**Galatians 5:13 - For you have been called to live in freedom—not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love.**

The word “serve” here means to act as a slave. A slave only does the bidding of the master. They are owned by the master, so they work to please their master. When it comes to serving one another, God uses us to serve and minister to each other. There are many practical ways to serve one another – but notice the service is in love.

Waitresses and waiters at a restaurant are there to serve the clients. They don’t necessarily serve out of love, they serve because it is their job and they are paid to serve. It is their job to bring to the table the food ordered. It is also their job to bring drinks, condiments, to be aware of needs and anticipate those needs even before they ask. As devoted followers of Jesus Christ, we serve one another, not because we are paid to do so, or because we have been instructed that way by Jesus our example, but we serve because of love. When we serve one another, we have to be aware of others; aware of their needs and serve them in such a way that their needs are met.

#### **Conclusion:**

Here is my challenge to you this morning. In your family or in your small group, do one of these things each day this week: encourage, accept, instruct, or serve one another. See what happens. I bet it will strengthen your relationship with them and it will definitely build community. We can best do these things to build community in a small group. Let’s practice these “one another” statements, and make them a part of how we become fully devoted followers of Christ. 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.

If we can’t serve one another in love within the family of God, how can we ever hope to serve the people who are not followers of Christ? Love starts at home. The healthy attitude of service is born out of freedom, not obligation, not fear, not avoiding conflict. We serve because that is the example the Lord Jesus gave to us.

Jesus picked up the towel and washed the filth off the feet of His disciples at the Last Supper. He said this about serving... **John: 13:13-16 - You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because it is true. And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. How true it is that a servant is not greater than the master. Nor are messengers more important than the one who sends them.** Let’s be sure we get it right. We are not greater than our Lord and if He could fulfill the role of a servant at the Last Supper by doing the job that no one else wanted or was willing to do just to make His disciples comfortable, then how much more should we be willing to do whatever menial tasks there might be in order to serve one another.