

ETHAN TEMPLE MINISTRIES
TOOLS FOR LIFE
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FELLOWSHIP GROUPS AND CHURCH GROWTH

The fellowship of believers will play an important role in [the] spiritual, emotional, and even physical restoration that God wants each one of us to experience.

Growth should – and must be – the goal of every Christian fellowship group. If the group is not growing, it is not functioning in the manner God intends. Remember, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is given for both our personal spiritual growth and for the spreading of the gospel:

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Hence, nonbelievers, or individuals who are not church members, should be present.

It is essential for our own personal spiritual growth to be involved in winning others to Christ. We must personally heed God’s command to be “fruitful, and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). God could have used angels for the work of soul winning; however, He did not. Why? He knows the importance of each of us being personally involved in reaching others for Christ. Ellen White makes a significant statement concerning this:

“If you will go to work as Christ designs that His disciples shall, and win souls for Him, you will feel the need of a deeper experience and a greater knowledge in divine things, and will hunger and thirst after righteousness. You will plead with God, and your faith will be strengthened and your soul will drink deeper drafts at the well of salvation. Encountering opposition and trials will drive you to the Bible and prayer. You will grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, and will develop a rich experience” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 80).

The support the fellowship group gives will play a significant role in our efforts to reach out to others. The members of the group will join in prayer for those we are reaching out to. The counsel of those more experienced in soul winning will be a great benefit to us. The spiritual fathers and mothers in the group will be used by God to assist the less experienced in leading others to Christ.

The fellowship group will provide a marvelous environment for the one seeking God, for he will find loving, caring individuals who will accept him as he is. The seeker will find himself in an environment in which God's Spirit can work in a powerful way for his conversion to Christ. We read in the book of Acts that as the early Christians continued to fellowship together the church grew:

“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:46, 47).

God will minister to both the believers and nonbelievers who are present in the fellowship group. He will do this by means of the fruits and gifts of the Spirit. The small fellowship group setting completely changes the traditional impersonal dynamic of evangelism when individuals attend an evangelistic meeting in response to a mailed advertisement. The very essence of the fellowship group is close, intimate, interpersonal relationships. When a nonbeliever comes to experience Christianity and new biblical truths in the setting of this fellowship, he does so in the context of a close interpersonal relationship with a member of the group. He is placed in a redemptive environment that is conducive to his personal spiritual growth.

Personal Reflection and Discussion

What are the two purposes of genuine Christian fellowship groups?

List suggestions on how a fellowship group can become effective in reaching others outside the group for Christ:

How do you plan to become part of a growing fellowship group and be used by God to share Christ with others?

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