



Light from the Word

Special role of the Apostolic Christian Single Group

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:” (Ephesians 4:14-15)

The development of the “Single Group” in the Apostolic Christian brotherhood was most likely not planned, but rather a natural outgrowth of the application of biblical principles. The truths that bind the body of Christ together in fellowship also bind young believers together. The body of Christ is often referred to as a flock. Jesus affirmed, “My sheep know my voice ...” and referred to Himself as the Good Shepherd. Like sheep, believers find safety, comfort, and peace in staying together in range of the Shepherd’s voice. Like lambs, young believers enjoy all these benefits with the added exuberance of youth. The delight of watching lambs frolicking together is unique in this world, and undoubtedly the Good Shepherd delights in watching young believers share their joy together. As human beings, we are created to enjoy fellowship in one form or another. As believers in Jesus, we are called out of fellowship with the world and into a deep communion with other believers. **The role of the single group is to provide godly rather than worldly fellowship.**

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” (Ephesians 5:11)

The joy of Christian fellowship brings with it both benefits and responsibilities. Some of the benefits are obvious, but others may not be quite so apparent. True fellowship goes deeper than superficial relationships. It permits the believer to confidently share his questions, doubts, beliefs, victories, and defeats with others. It gives opportunity to learn

how to respond to the tests of faith that life brings. It permits and validates encouragements to faithfulness. It elevates the bond of faith in the shed blood of Jesus above every natural barrier common to man. True fellowship seeks to bridge the perception of gaps between believers by experiencing relationships in the spirit rather than in the flesh. **The role of the single group is to remove barriers between believers.**

“Seeing that ye ... have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” (Colossians 3:10-14)

These are not easy barriers to break. But once broken by the Lord Jesus, through the power of love, one experiences a tremendous freedom in loving without fear. John reminds us that perfect love casts out all fear. Love does not become complete (perfect) without practice. That practice often takes place in the relative safety of the single group. The grace of God enables us to learn from mistakes, reveals our pride, diminishes superficial differences, and brings our love to maturity. **The role of the single group is to nurture a maturing love for God and the brotherhood.**

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment... If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this

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commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” (1 John 4:18-21)

The responsibilities of fellowship include a call to esteem others higher than oneself, an exhortation to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice, a charge to pray for one another, an awareness that one’s actions inevitably influence others, and an admonition that the strong should bear the infirmities of the weak. Few of these things come naturally, even to a soul that has been born again. The Apostle Paul reminded the Romans not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their mind. Time spent together in the young group gives opportunity to allow one’s transformation to be tested by “real-life” relationships and experiences, in the safety of a moderated environment. **The role of the single group is to provide a safe arena in which young believers can learn to put the love of God into practice.**

It also gives opportunity to learn from those who are older and more experienced. Just as in a family setting, the younger children often learn much from the experiences of the older siblings, in the single group, new converts and younger believers

learn much from their older siblings. Equally important, the wisdom of the parents is generally significantly greater than even the oldest sibling; it should not be thought that the older ones in the single group have greater wisdom than mature believers with many years’ experience in the tests of life. Rehoboam made the great mistake of listening to the counsel of his peers instead of the wise old counsellors, and he lost a large portion of his kingdom. **The role of the single group is to give opportunity for older single believers to serve as good examples, and when needed, point the younger to wiser counselors.**

“But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him.”
(2 Chronicles 10:8)

Experience in the young group also prepares us for a life of service and hospitality, rather than a life of expecting to be served. We learn that the greatest joys in life come from serving. Whether by hosting other young groups from our brotherhood, or by participating in local opportunities to serve, young believers learn how to perceive others’ needs and meet them with the love of Jesus. The mutual reinforcement that

comes from sharing such times of service with believers from across the brotherhood is priceless. In a world that devalues the Word of God more and more, shared times in the single group are faith-building experiences that last a lifetime! **The role of the single group is to teach godly service.**

“...but I am among you as he that serveth.” (Luke 22:26-27)